

Investi GATORS

Off the Hook



New York Times-Bestselling Author

John Patrick Green

Investi GATORS

Off the Hook

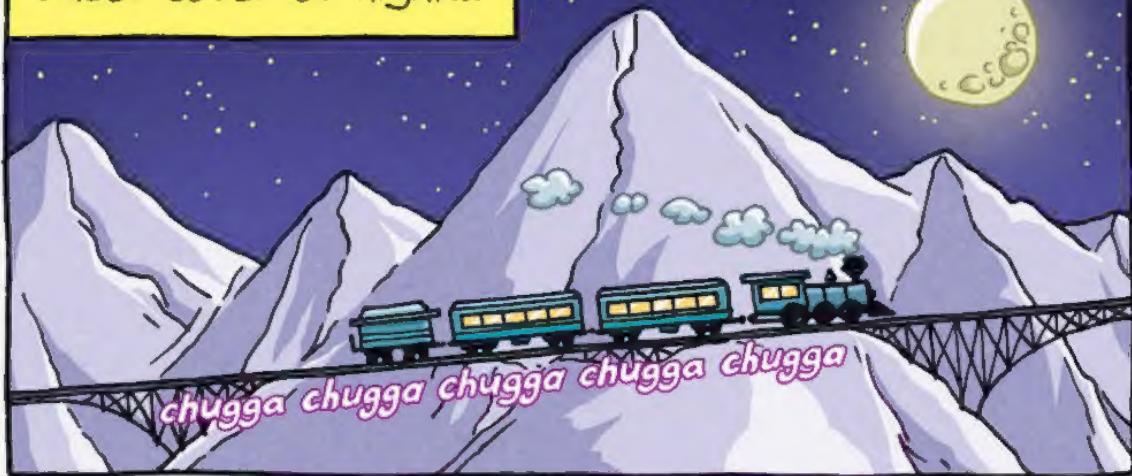
:01

First Second



Chapter 1

Under cover of night...



...a train speeds along a mountain pass!



Tickets?



And ALSO undercover on that train are the...

INVESTIGATORS!



...but we're undercover because someone on this train carries a case with a **stolen** list of S.U.I.T.* agents' names. So keep your eyes peeled for any clues.



Clues to a S.U.I.T. case, right.
Like I'm just gonna find...



...a trail of...bread crumbs?



And until then,
maintain radio
silence!



OOOF!



*Special Undercover Investigation Teams

Oh, excuse me, so sorry!

No, no, entirely
my fault!

Wait a sec—You're
CRACKERDILE!

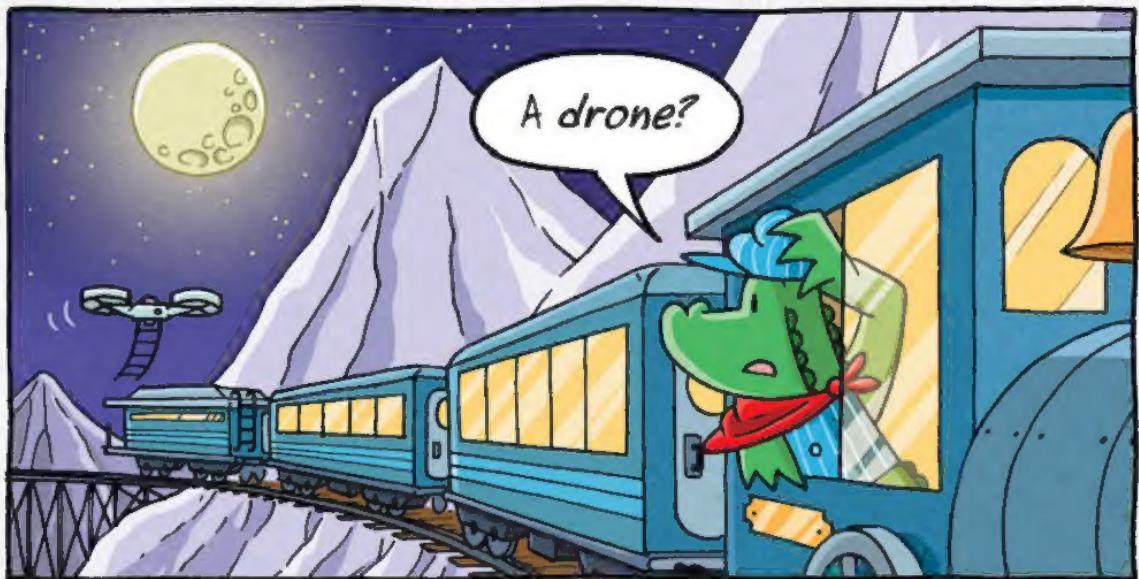
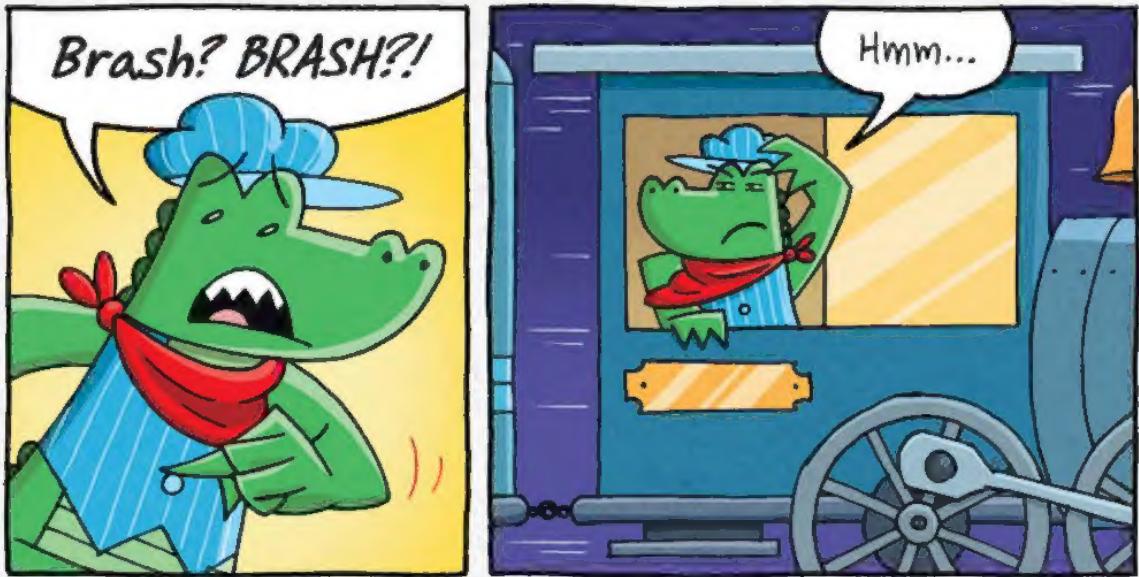
It seems nothing gets past
YOU, Agent Brash.

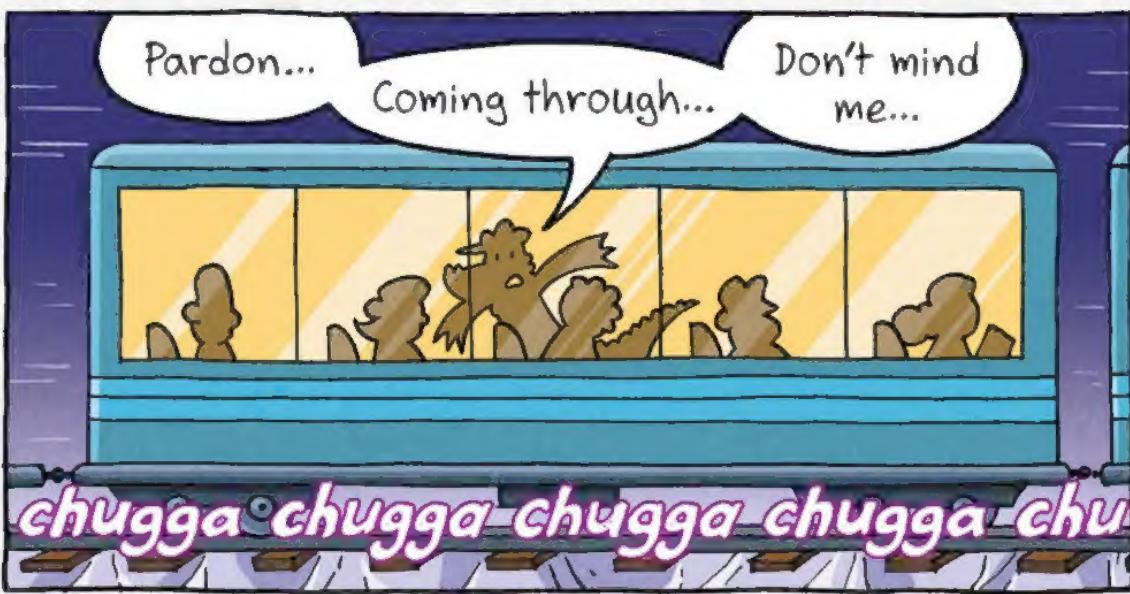
That's why I'm
going to...

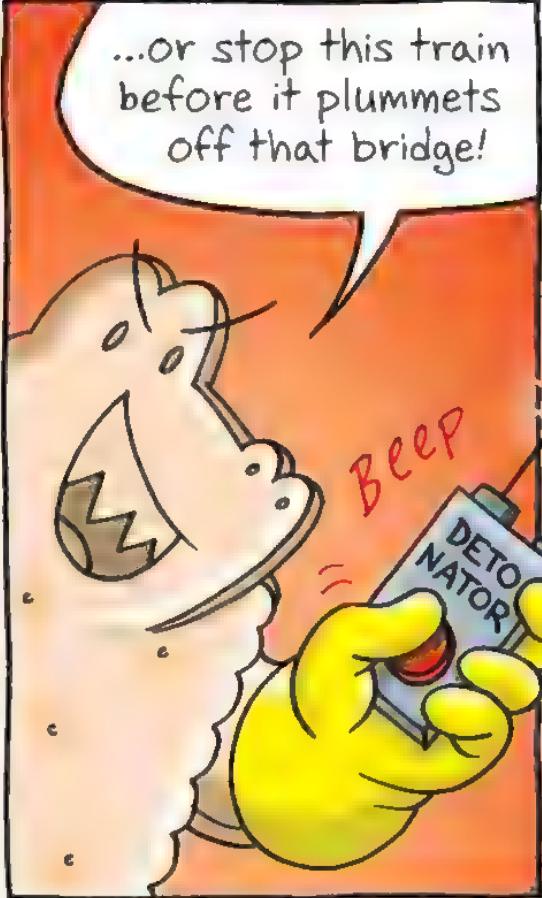
...RUN THE
OTHER WAY!

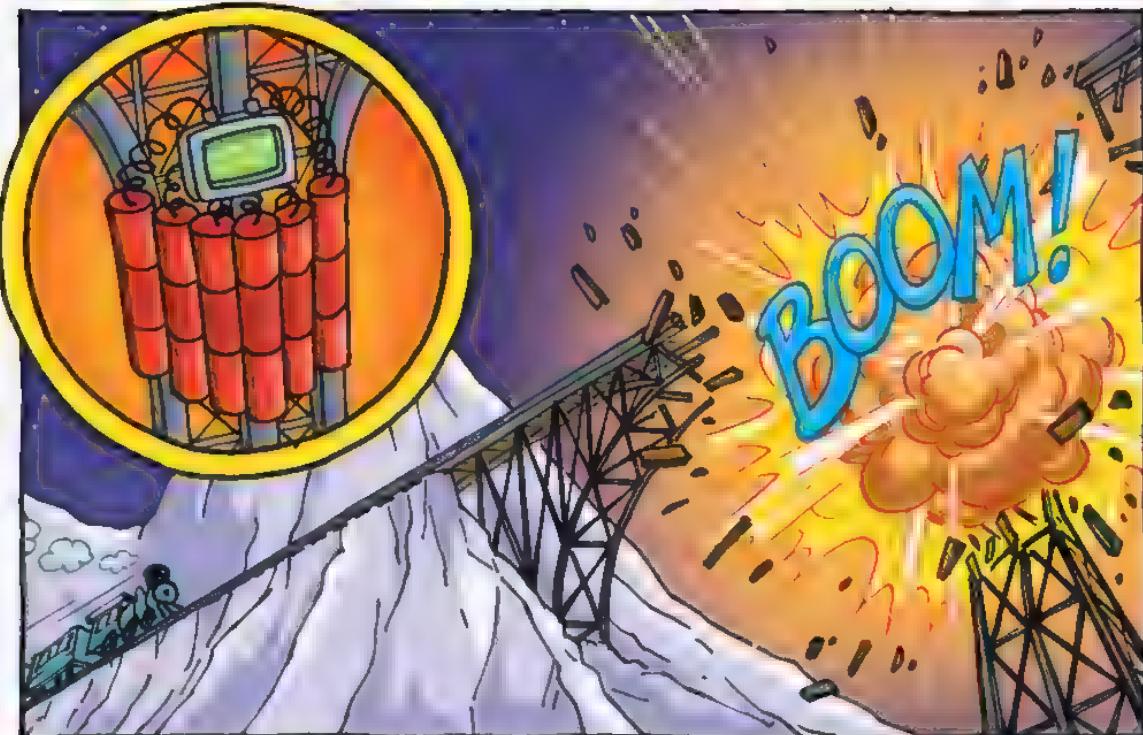
Mango! Crackerdile is on the
train! And he has the stolen
S.U.I.T.case!

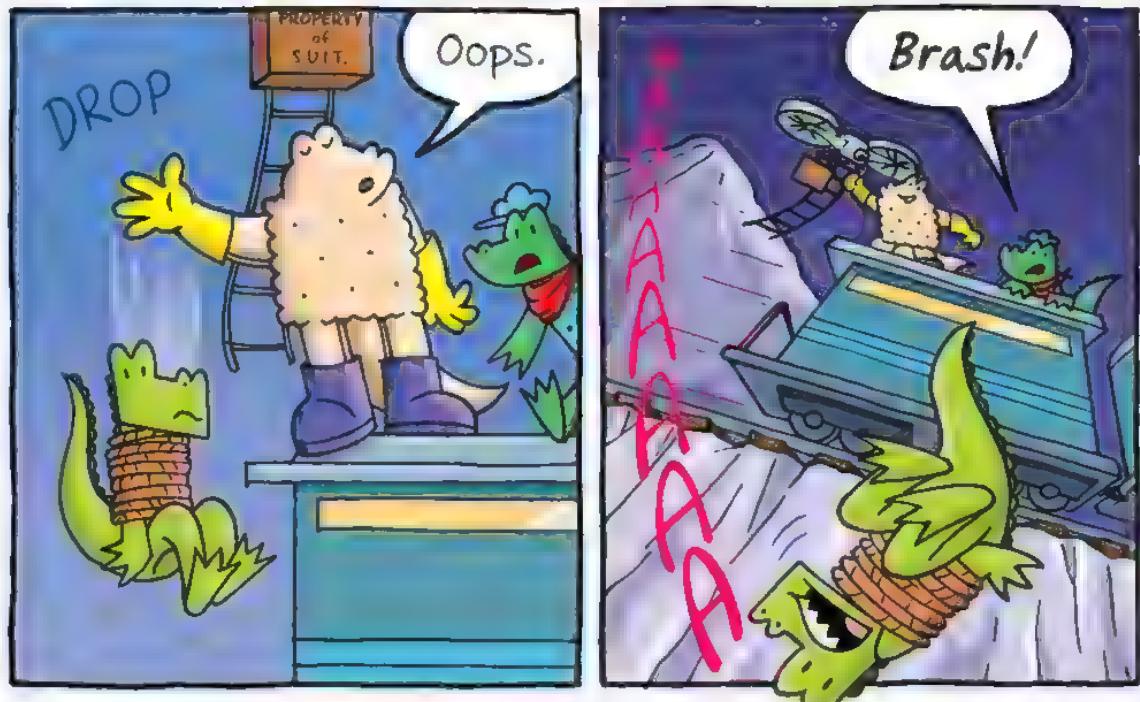


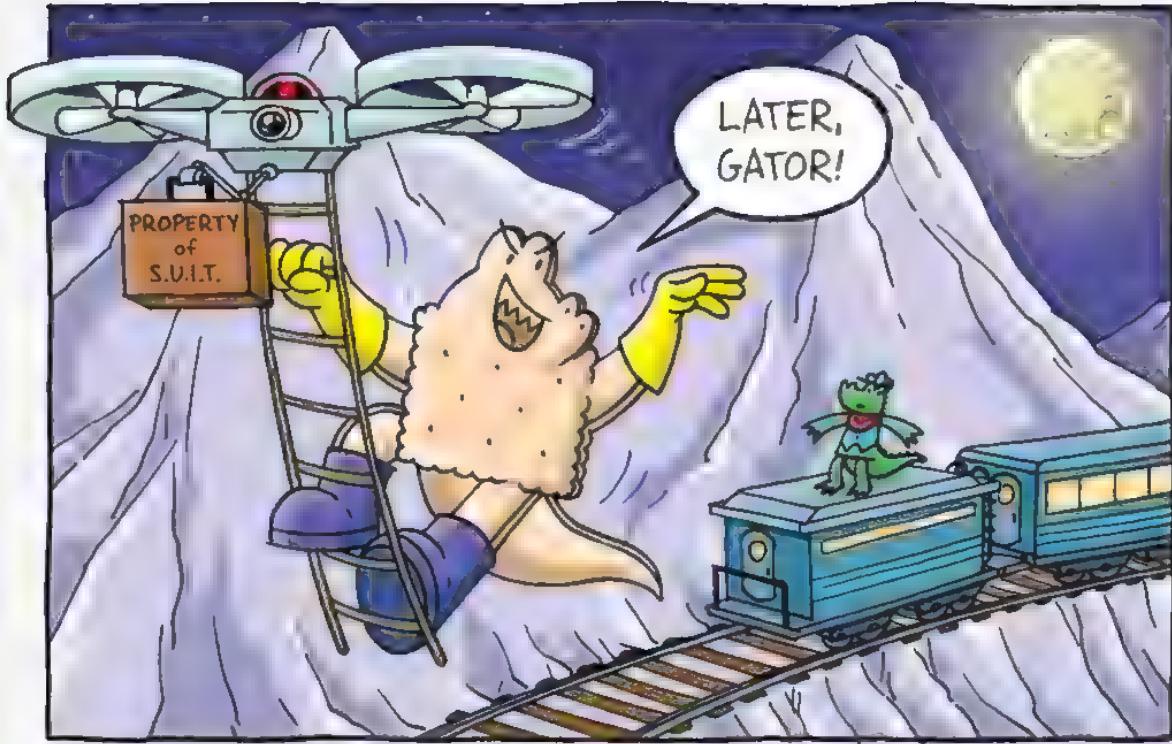


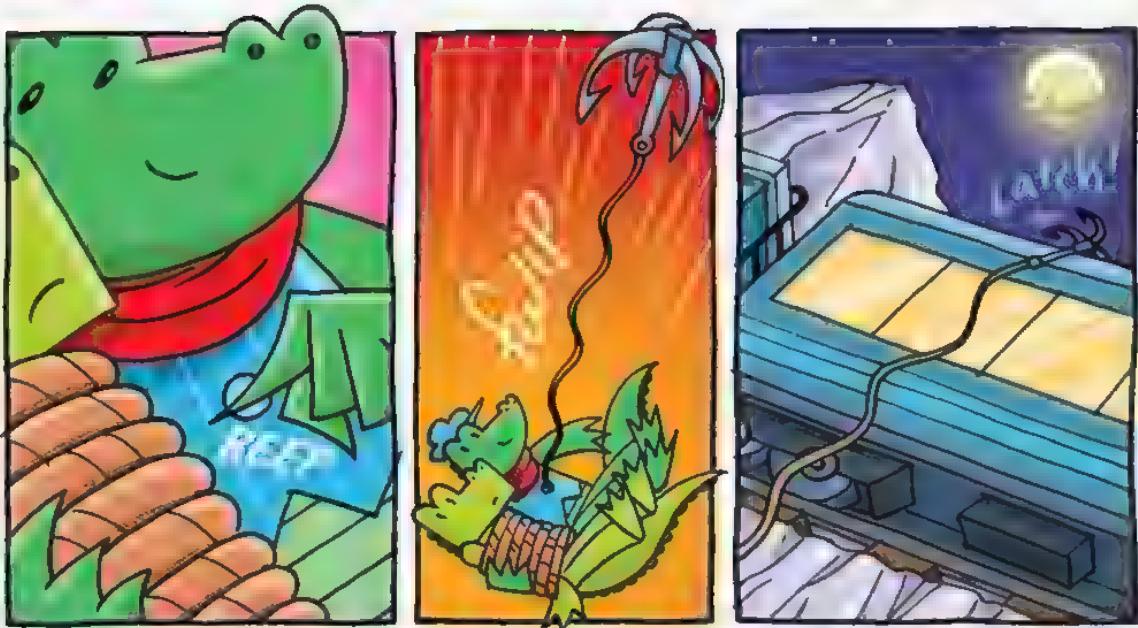


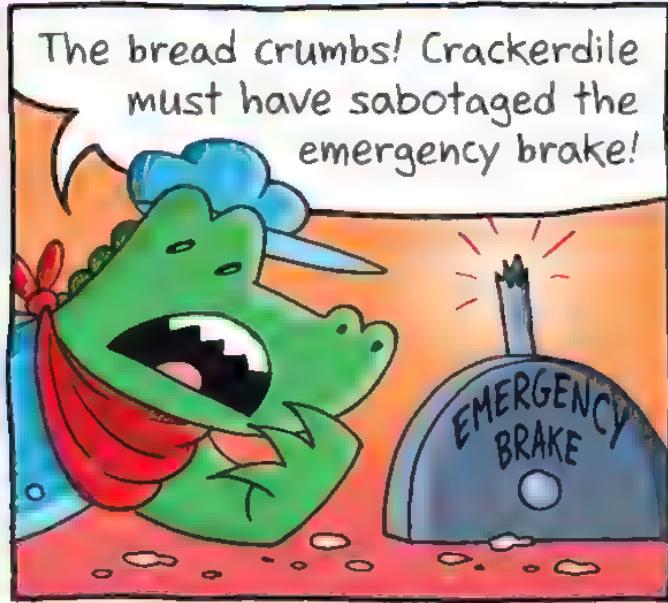




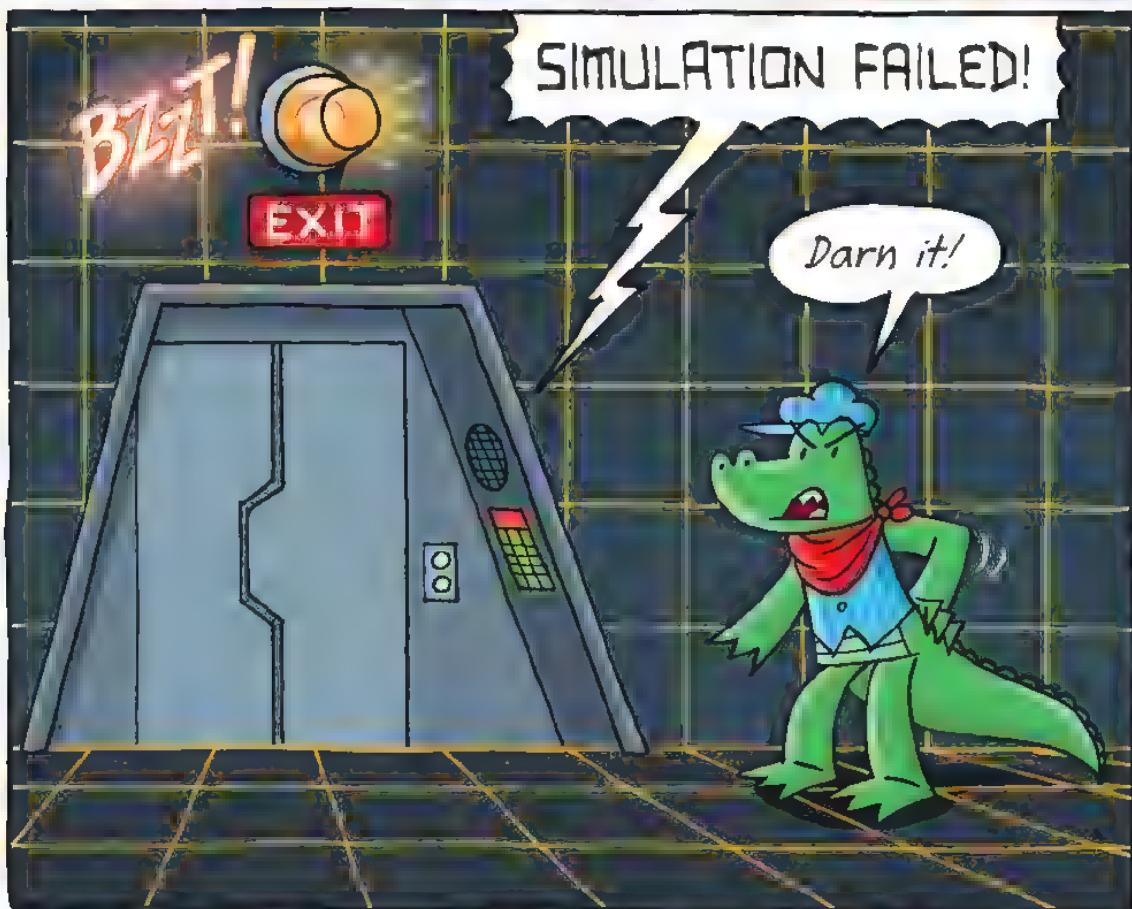












Chapter 2

Deep inside S.U.I.T. Headquarters...



Mango, you've run that training simulation a dozen times and you still haven't gotten it right.

It's not fair, Brash! It's a no-win scenario!



Even if I let Crackerdile kill you and I get to the front of the train before he bombs the bridge, the brakes are out, and we all go over the cliff anyway.



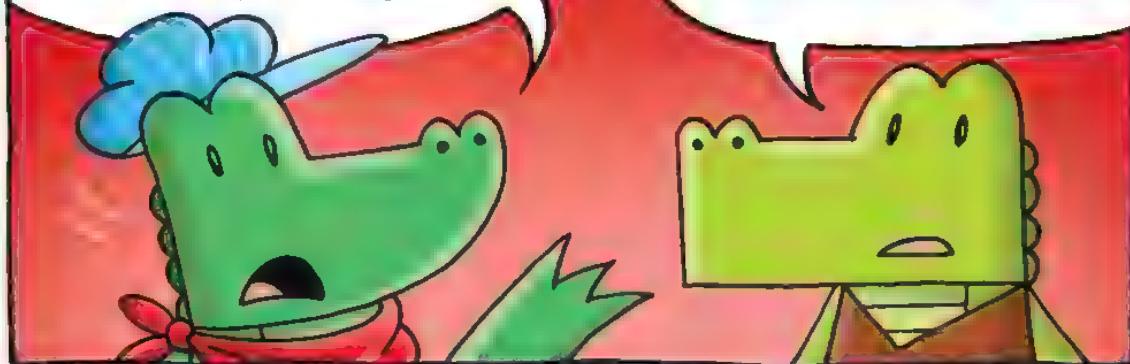
It always ends the same: Everyone dies and Crackerdile gets away!



Have you tried...not saving me *OR* stopping the train, but just capturing Crackerdile?



But...you're my partner! You'd die—and so would all the passengers!



True. But you've got to think about the **GREATER GOOD**.

Crackerdile is a threat to thousands, maybe MILLIONS of people—maybe even the **WHOLE WORLD!** No matter what happens to me or the people on that train, if he gets away, the mission is a failure!



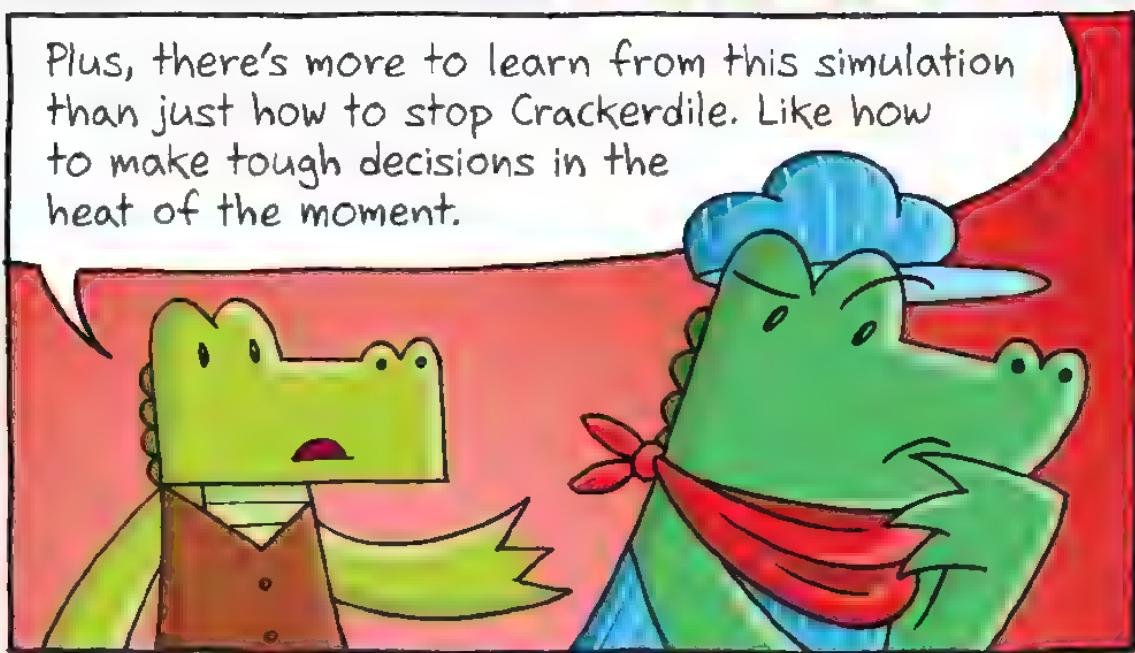
What do you mean he's a threat to thousands? Last time we saw him he was a pile of mush that probably got washed out to sea. I don't even know why I'm training to stop him.



You're right. Crackerdile **ISN'T** a threat anymore. But if you can't beat him, what if there's a villain even **MORE** dangerous than a former-agent-turned-radioactive-saltine-cracker?



Plus, there's more to learn from this simulation than just how to stop Crackerdile. Like how to make tough decisions in the heat of the moment.



Sometimes there is no GOOD choice. But you still have to make A choice.

Yeah, I guess you're right. For the **GREATER GOOD**.



Who comes up with these scenarios, anyway?

STAINING SI



SIMULATOR

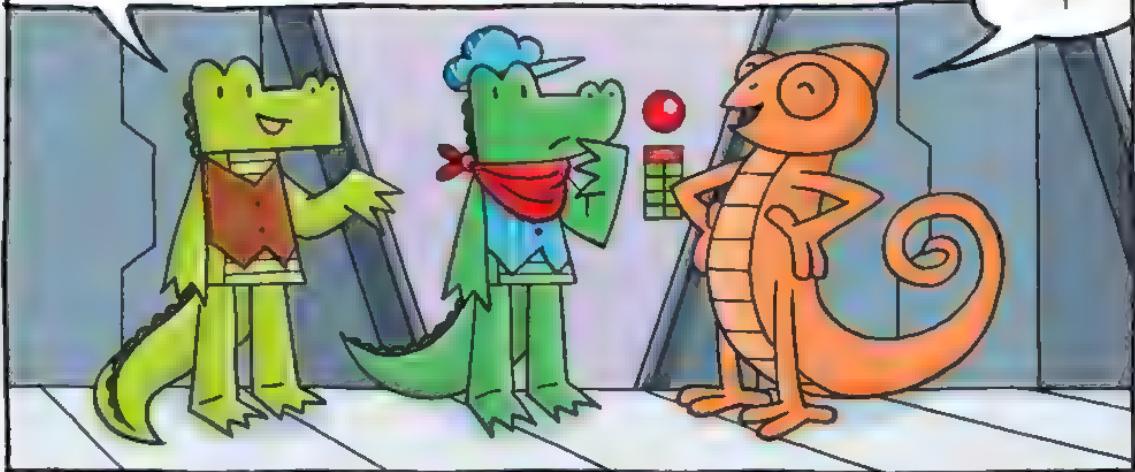
That would be me.

STAINING SI



Mango, you know **Cilantro**. You and she were junior agents around the same time, right?

Yup!



Oh, I...don't recall seeing you. I'm so sorry.

Don't be! Not seeing me is the whole point. I'm a chameleon!



I can change my skin patterns and colors to blend in with my surroundings.

It's a skill that would make *ME* the **PERFECT FIELD AGENT!**

:sigh:



Buuuuut it does also come in handy when thinking up spy scenarios to test **OTHER** agents' skills.

Ah! There you are, Gators!



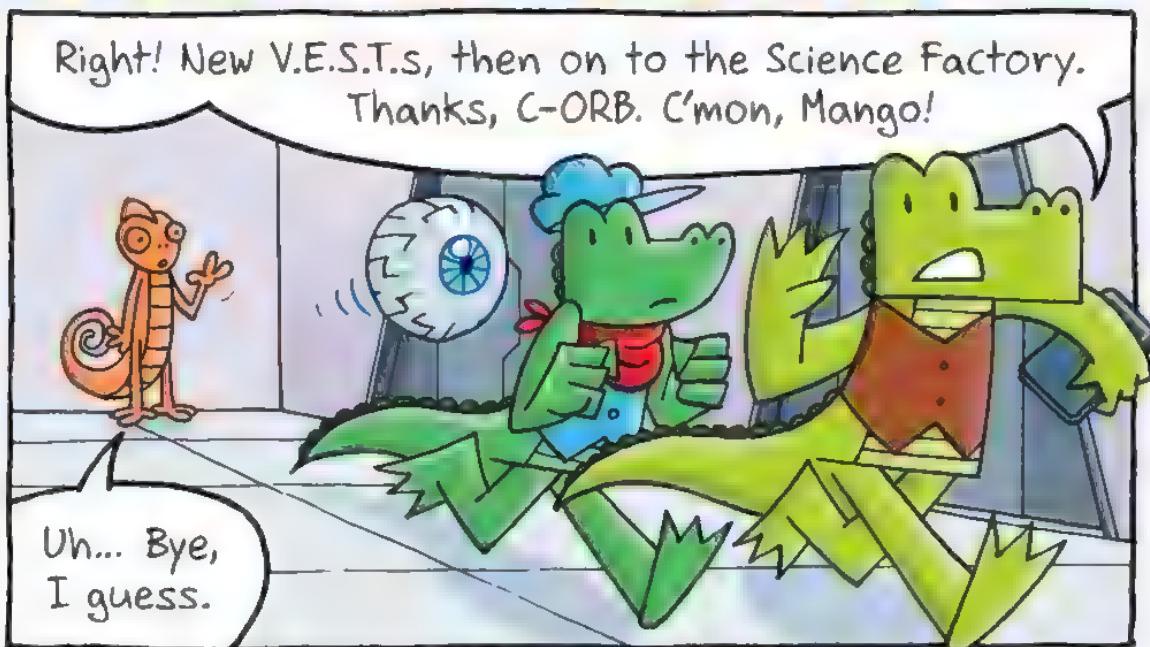
What is it, C-ORB*?

I have an urgent update on—Oh!
Hello, Cilantro. I didn't see you there.



*Computerized Ocular Remote Butler





*Apparel Research and Manufacturing...Service? Section? Something?

Why always vests? Why not something like...
a trench coat? Trench coats are way cool...
So mysterious...



You can never tell if
someone's a GOOD GUY
or a BAD GUY if they're
in a trench coat!



We're GOOD GUYS no
matter what we wear,
Mango...

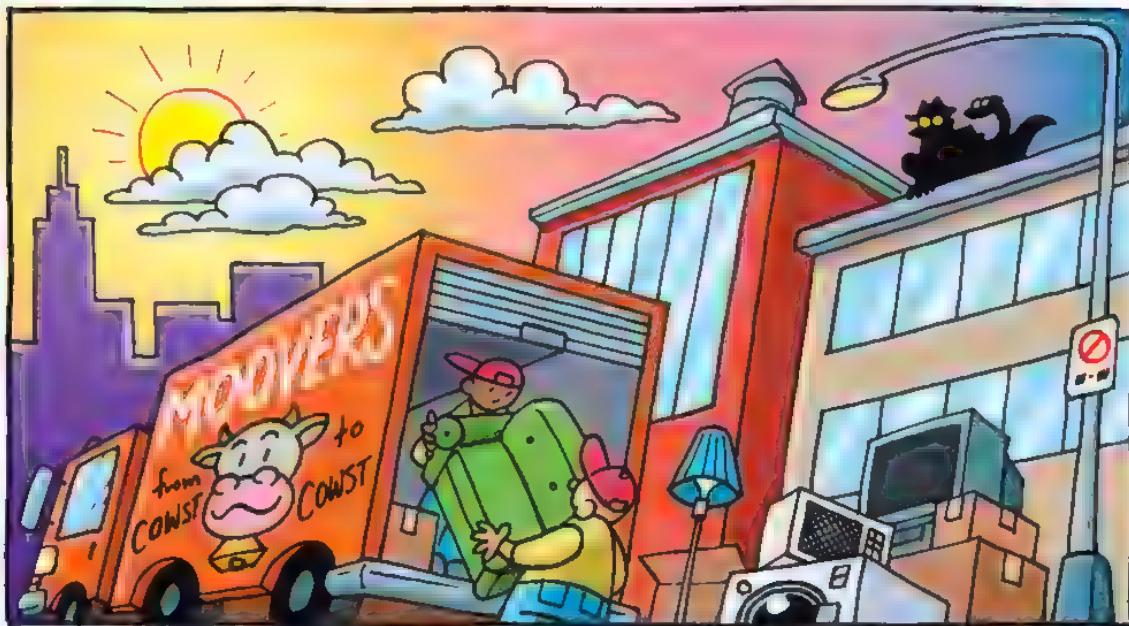


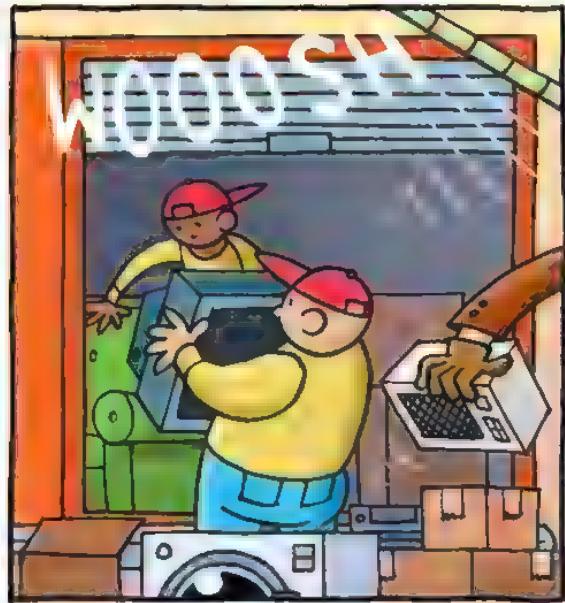
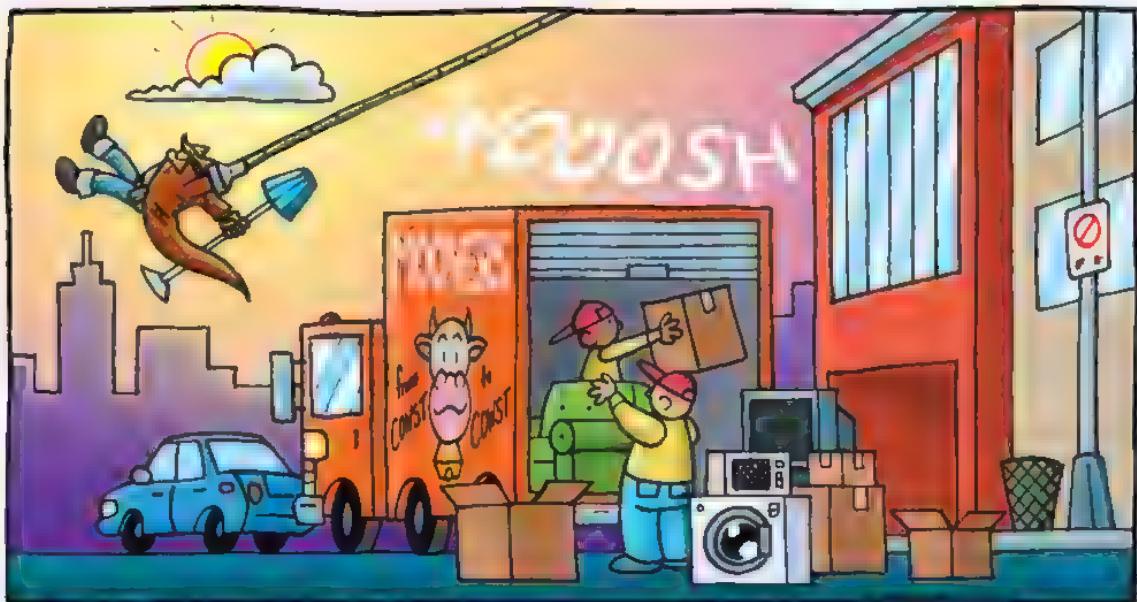
But we are In-VEST-igators,
not In-TRENCH COAT-igators.
That doesn't even make
sense!



Chapter 3

That morning
in the city...



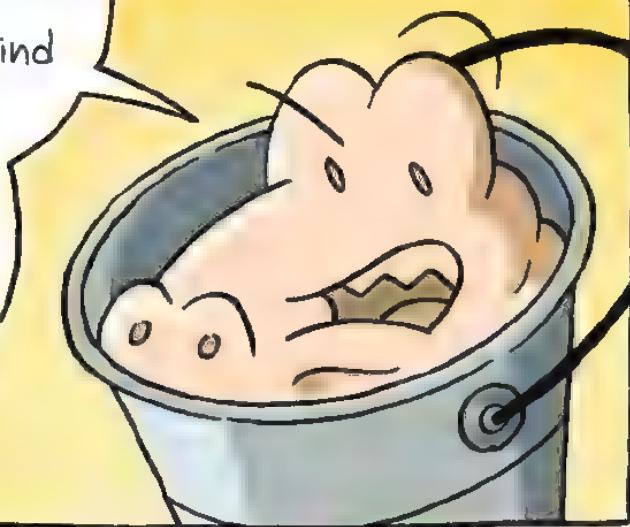








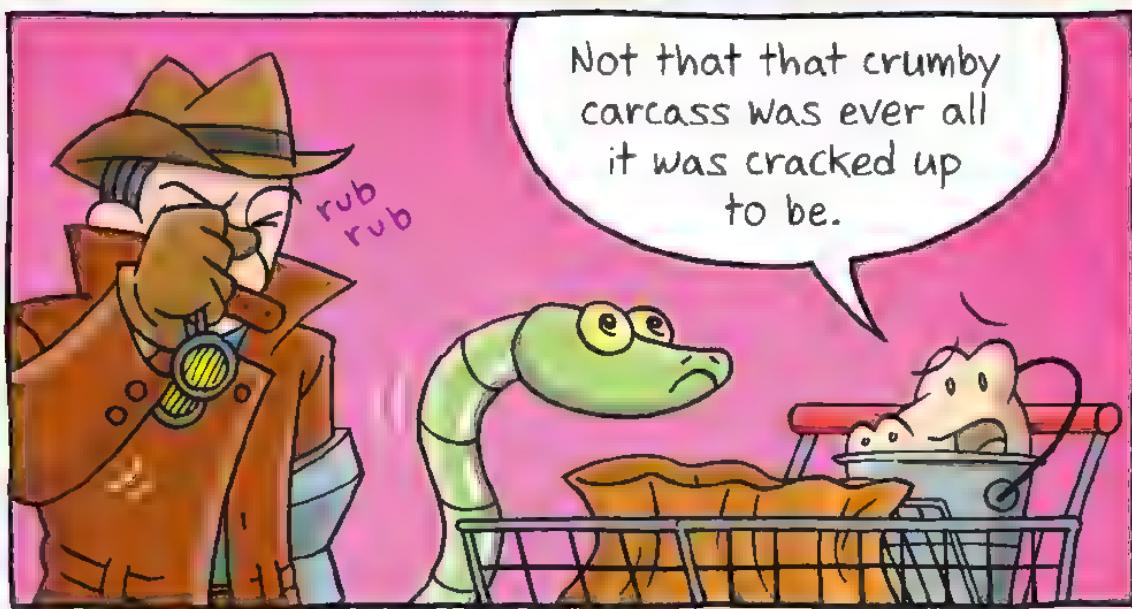
And who knows what kind of effect microwaves would have on the radioactive waste that courses through my veins...if I even have veins...

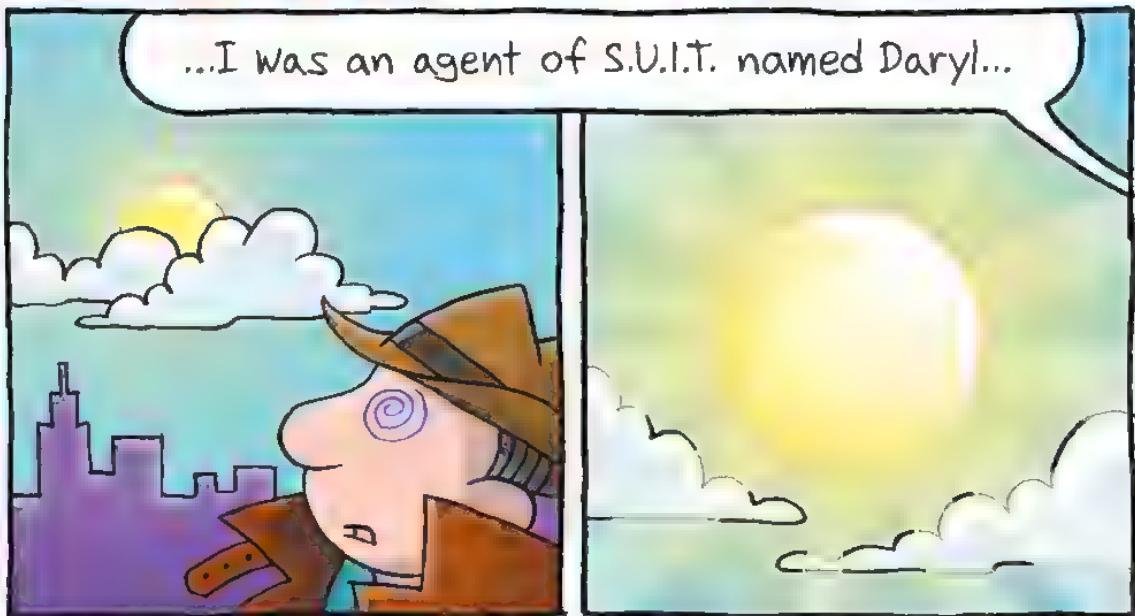


Bah! None of this junk will help me, **CRACKERDILE**, be restored from this bucket of dough back to my crispy, crackery condition.



Not that that crumby carcass was ever all it was cracked up to be.





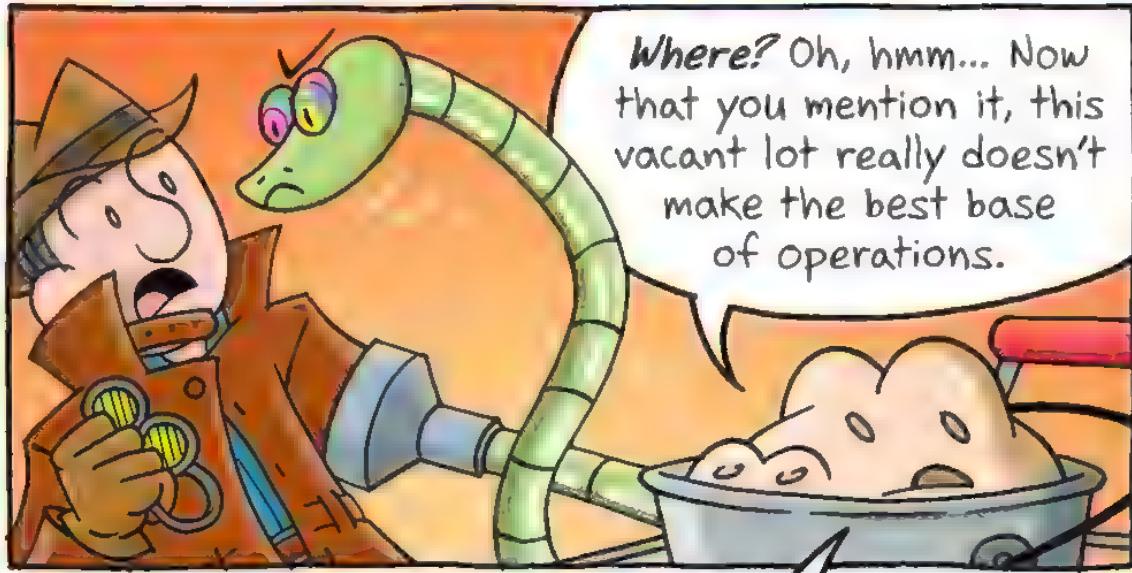
I'm BILL PLUNGERMAN,
ACE PLUMBER!

This tool is a DRAIN
SNAKE. I've named
mine Slinker!

It's a ROBOT GHOST!!

HEY!

Are you even
listening?





Chapter 4

I've gotta admit, it's nice to find someone in a predicament similar to my own.



Me, a villainous bucket of unbaked batter. You, a monstrous, plumber-tailed snake. Both of us on a quest for revenge!

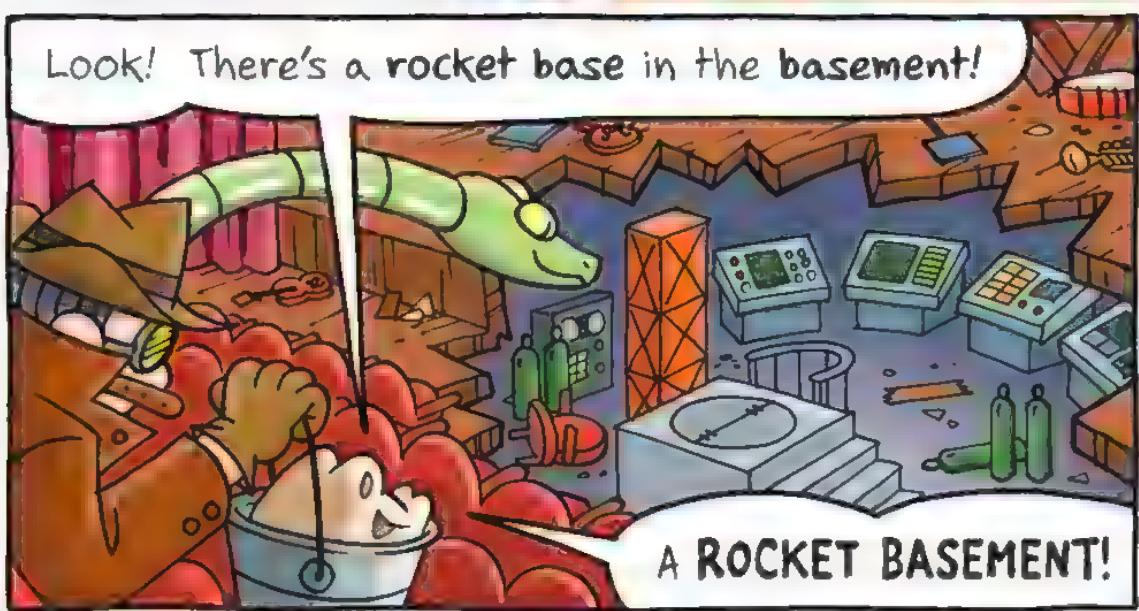


I assume! Correct me if I'm wrong, but revenge is a common motivation for villains and monsters.



Hey, what's this? The abandoned opera house! That's both grand AND epic! Hmm... Looks like it's seen better days, but it may have potential for a secret lair.





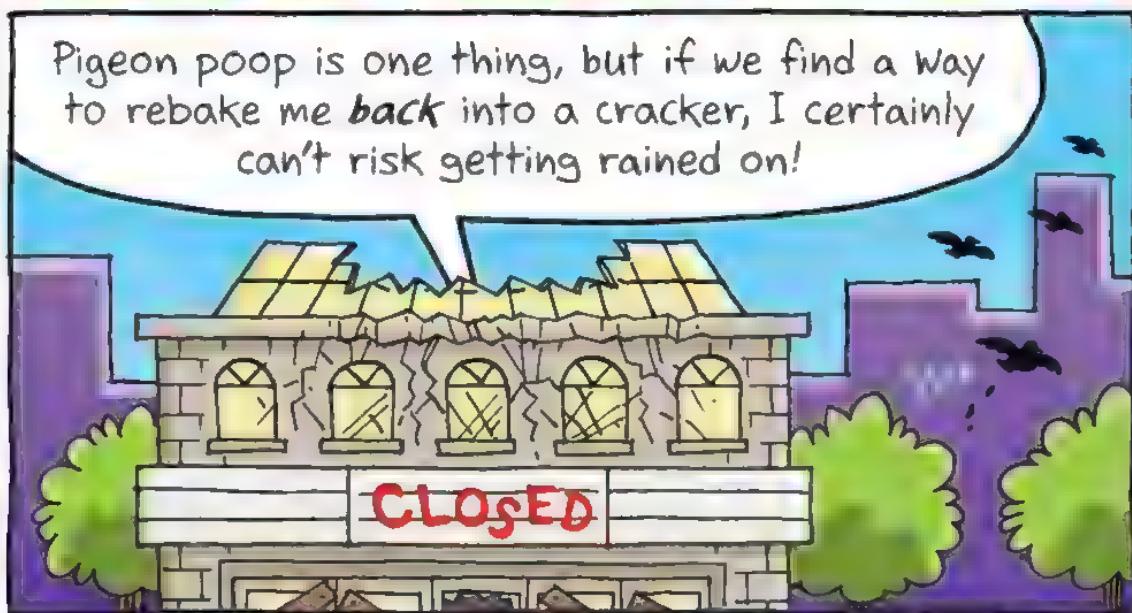




This place is definitely a fixer-upper. You may be a plumber, but we'll need a *lot* more help—like a bunch of construction workers to repair that roof.



Pigeon poop is one thing, but if we find a way to rebake me back into a cracker, I certainly can't risk getting rained on!



Chapter 5

Back at S.U.I.T. HQ...

Sven! The
InvestiGators
are here!

Sven?

A.R.M.S.

APPAREL RESEARCH and MANUFACTUR



HEY,
SVEN!

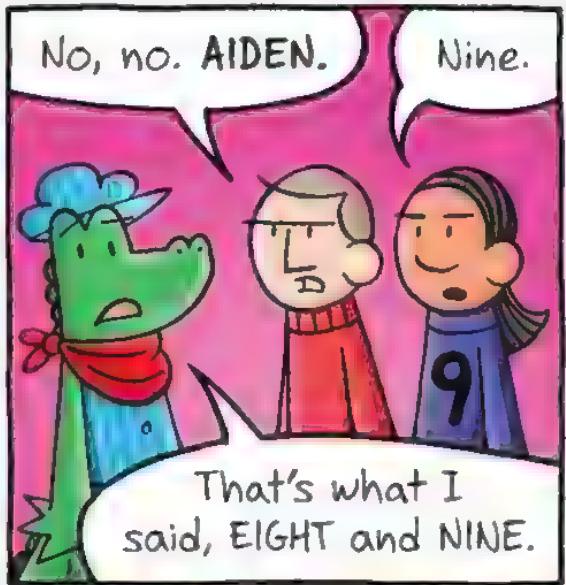
Huh. Where
could he be?

Hello, Mango and Brash.
Sven's just finishing up.
I'm Aiden. This is Nine.



Oh! Hello, Agents Eight and Nine.





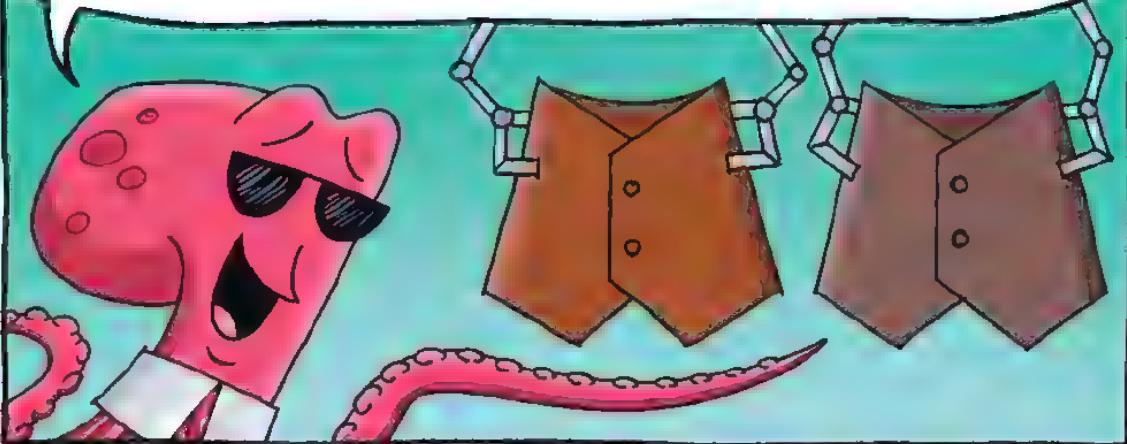
*Very Exciting Spy Technology

Sven, doesn't the T in V.E.S.T. stand for "technology"?

Hee hee! You just said "technology technology"!



I, uh, MEANT to say it! Because these V.E.S.T.s are *TWICE* as technologically advanced!



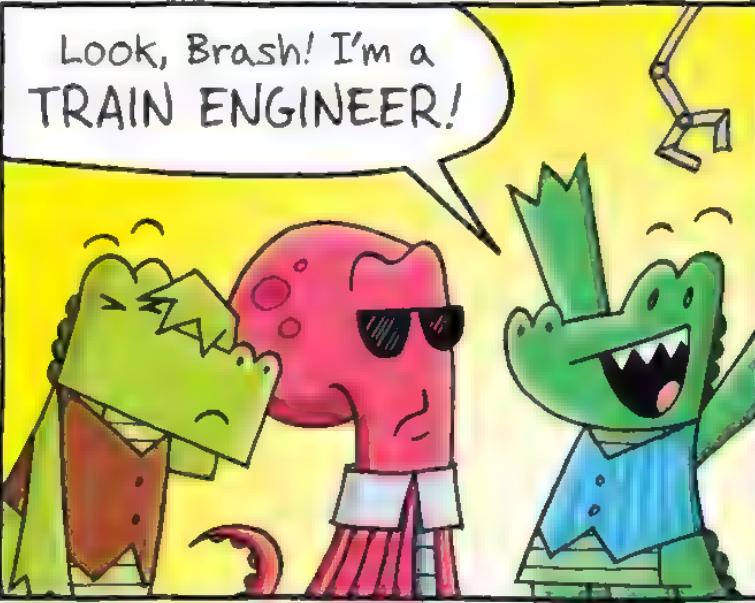
Um, Sven? This looks just like my current V.E.S.T.

Am I missing something?



Indeed you are, Brash! Previously you needed a different V.E.S.T. for each new undercover job. But now...





New camouflage nanotech can change these V.E.S.T.s' patterns and colors to suit *any* disguise you need to blend in during your investigations.



Oh, WOW! You finally used my design for chameleon V.E.S.T.s!

Cilantro!



Have you been
there this whole
time?

I knew my ideas were good
enough for the A.R.M.S.
Division!

Er...

But...

Thanks,
Mr. Septapus!

Check this out,
Cilantro!



With a press of his V.E.S.T., Mango's ready for the ocean!

HA!

I'm gonna hit the beach!



Cilantro's idea should earn her a promotion!

Now I'm a fancy waiter!

Well, I can't wait—

WAIT!
WAIT!! STOP the montage!

I'm sorry, Cilantro, but I didn't get the idea from you. Yes, you're a chameleon, but octopuses can change their color and texture, too.



I've been perfecting this technology for as long as I can remember.

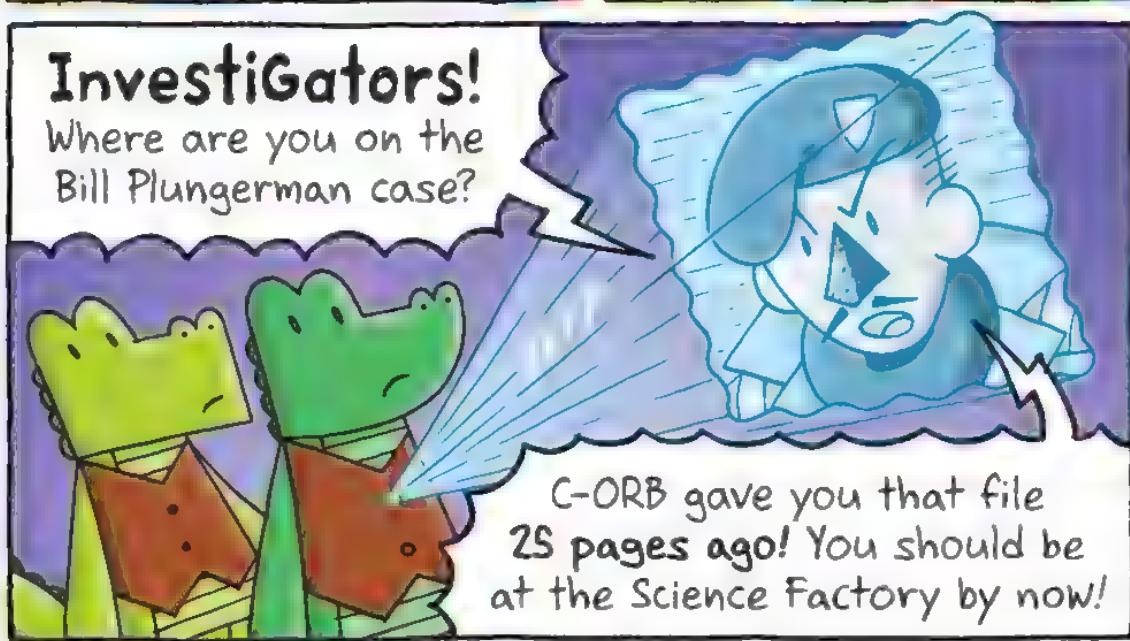


I thought the plural of octopus was octopi...?



InvestiGators!

Where are you on the Bill Plungerman case?



Oh! Yes, sir, General Inspector. On our way!



C'mon, Brash! Put on your new V.E.S.T.!

Wait—you're actually wearing my new V.E.S.T., Mango. That's the color brown that I always wear.



Just put on the other one.

You can make 'em any color you want. See?



Remember, Gators, those V.E.S.T.s are PROTOTYPES!



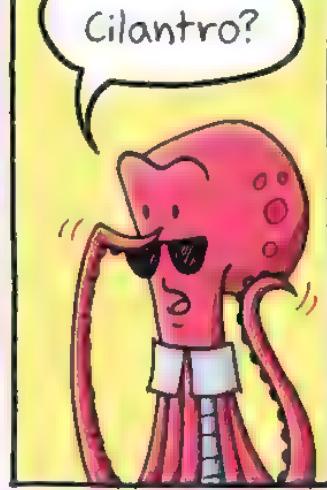
They haven't been field tested yet!



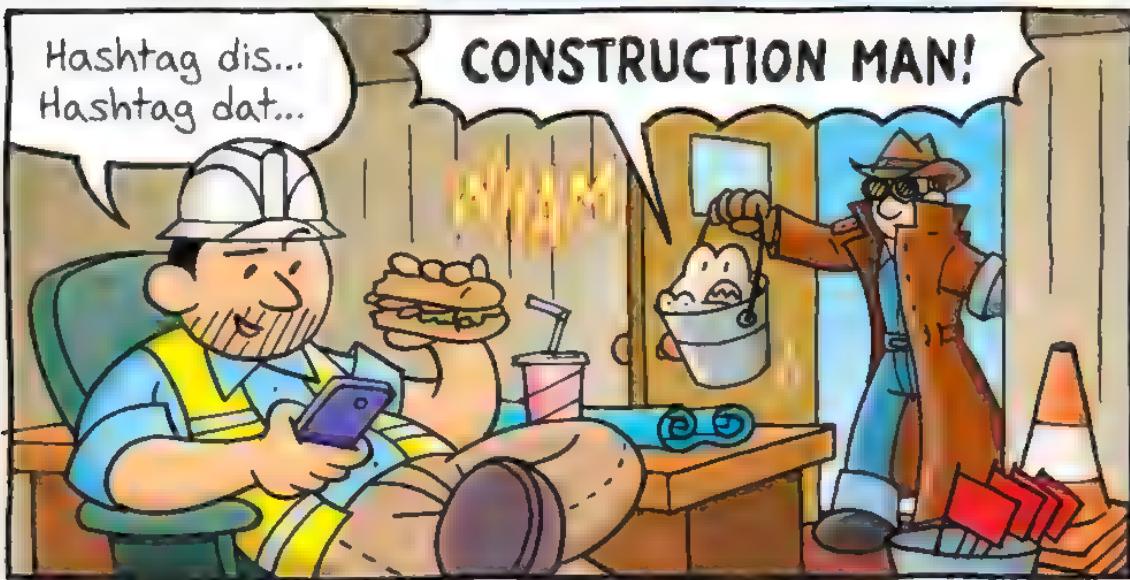
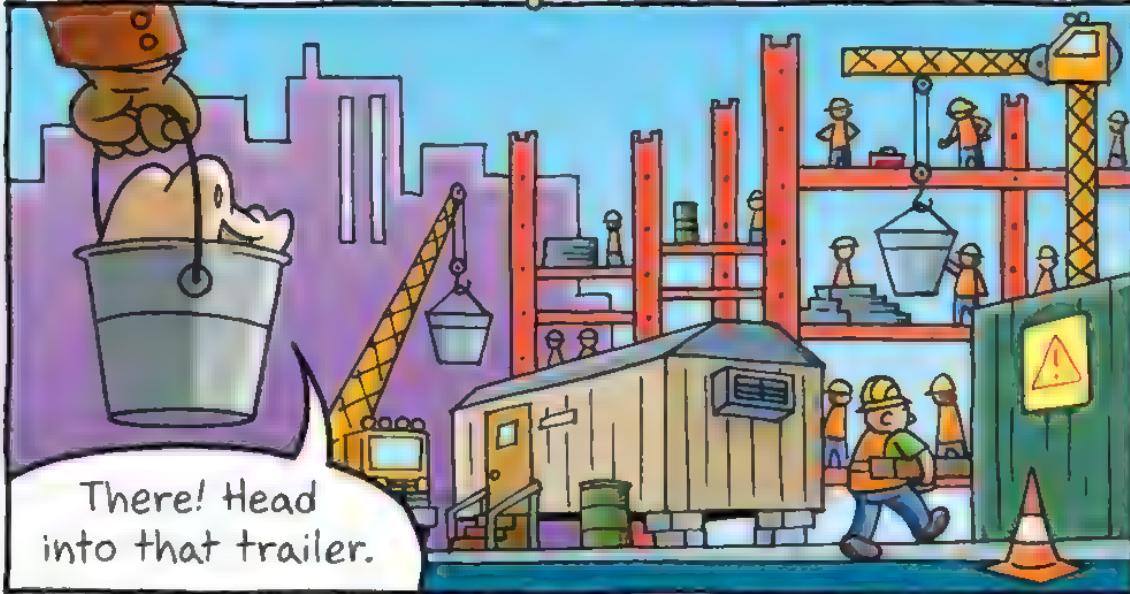
Now, Cilantro...



Cilantro?



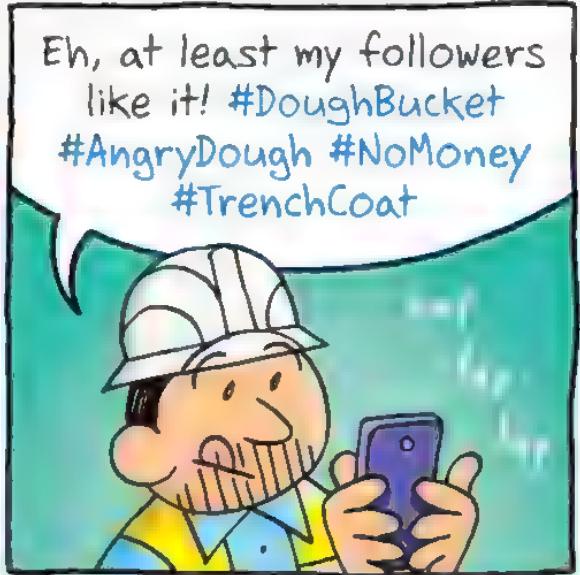
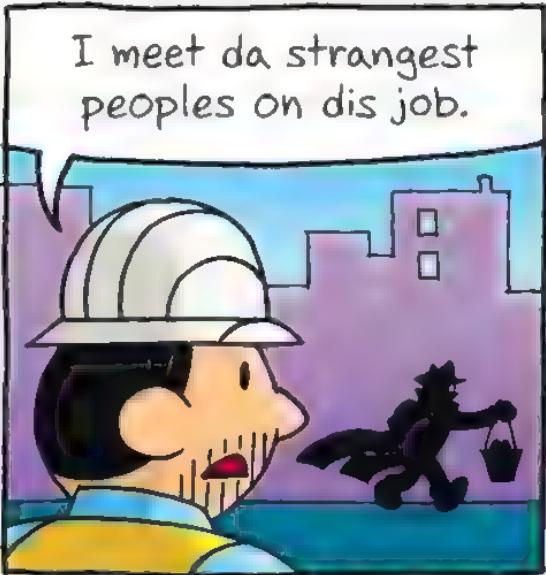
Chapter 6





Why, YES! I'm an entire
BUCKET OF
DOUGH!







Heh heh. Sorry, lady.
We're a little new
at this.

=AHEM=

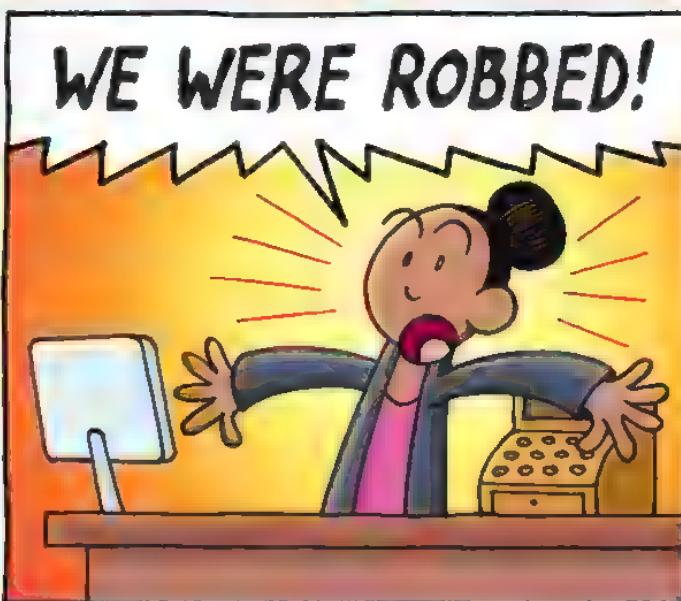
Put the
MONEY in
the BUCKET.

Um...
Okayyy?

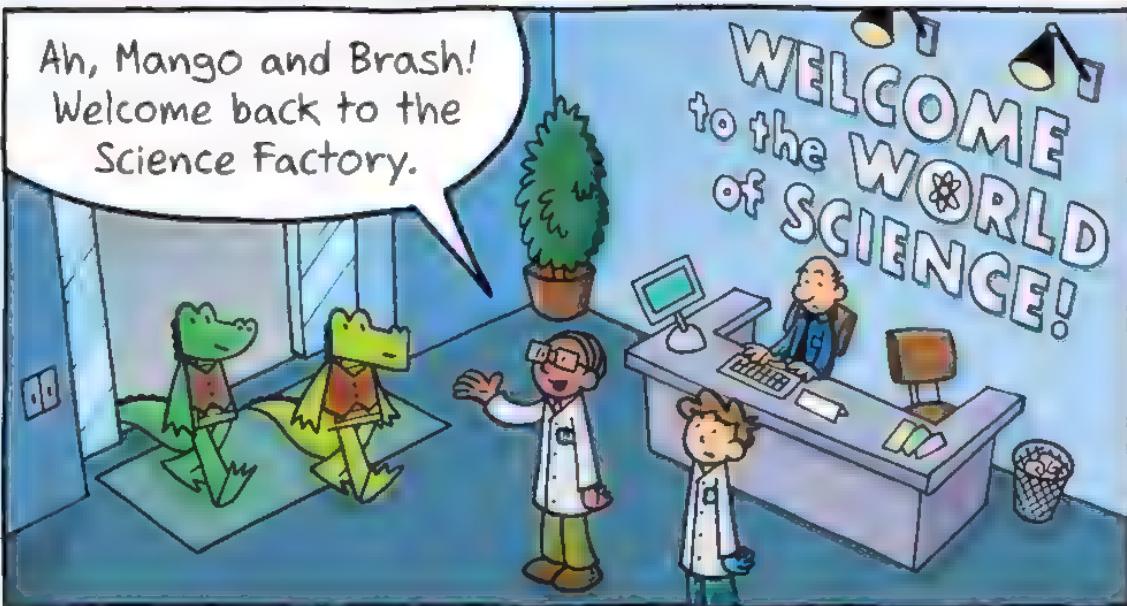
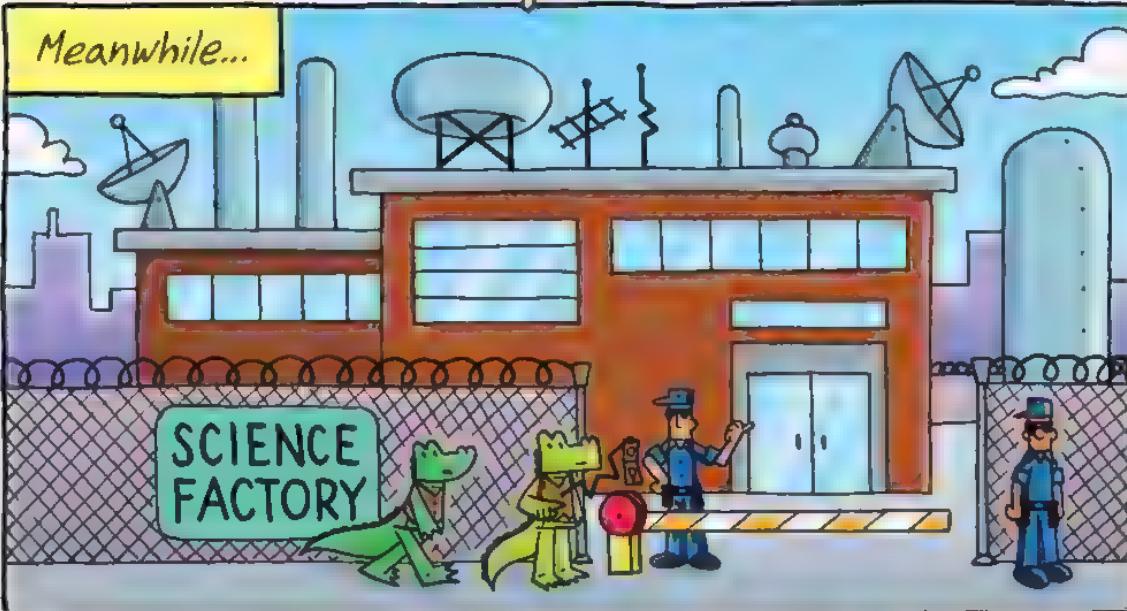


And now, you hand the dough—me AND
the money—back over.





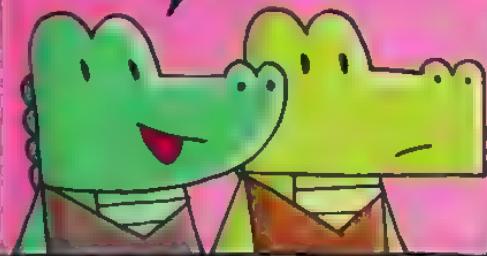
Chapter 7



You two remember our serpentologist, Dr. Morrow.

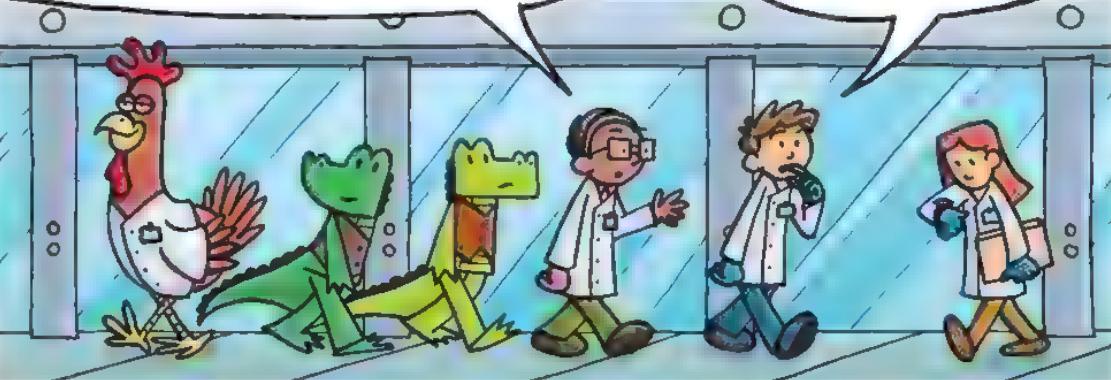
It was *MY* snake that got kidnapped by that plumber Bill Plungerman!

Hello again!



Now, now, Tom. It's possible it was the plumber who was kidnapped by your snake!

Hmm, true. Snakes can be very persuasive.



Does it matter who kidnapped who? The snake's and plumber's bodies were physically combined in the last science accident. One can't go anywhere without the other.

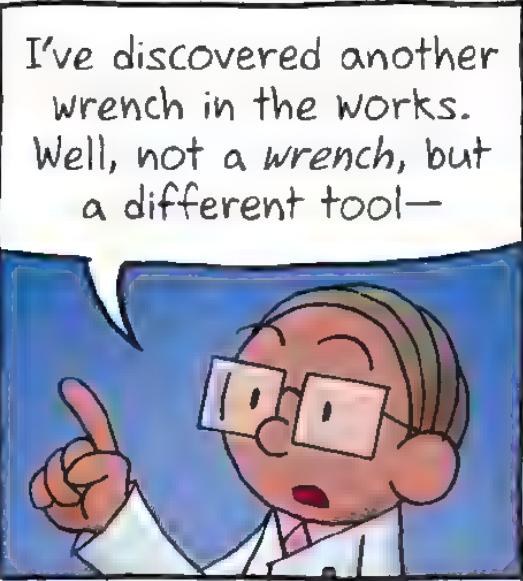
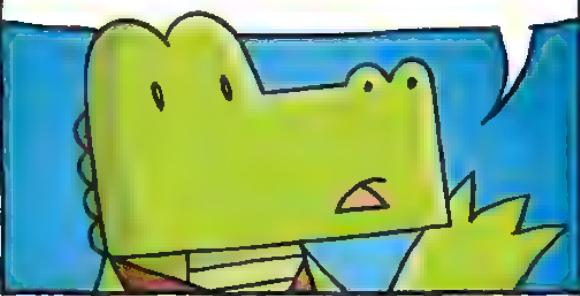


Yes, their bodies were combined. But now their one body has **TWO HEADS!** And as the Head Scientist, I can tell you that two heads aren't always better than one!



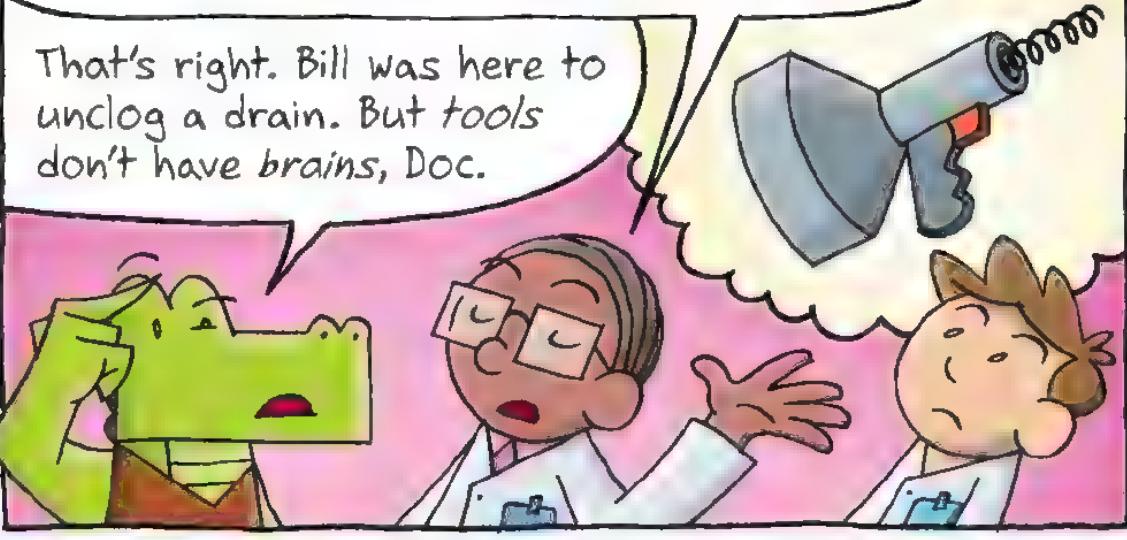
Two heads means two **BRAINS**, and it's my guess that the brain of the snake and the brain of the plumber are fighting for control over their combined body.

That must be what's made Bill Plungerman so hard to find. Who could predict what a snake brain might do with a plumber body?



I've discovered another wrench in the works. Well, not a wrench, but a different tool—

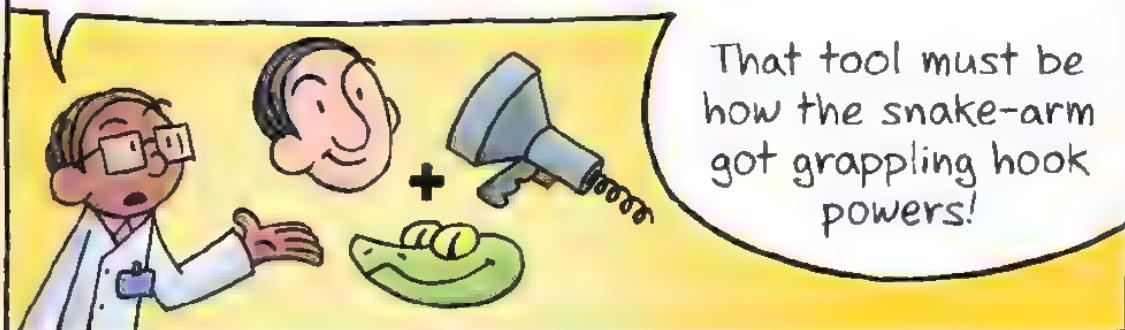
The plumber's **DRAIN SNAKE TOOL!**



That's right. Bill was here to unclog a drain. But tools don't have brains, Doc.



I saw on security footage from the incident that the snake was wrapped around the tool and the plumber's arm at the moment they all got combined.



With power like that, the snake and/or plumber might not want to be found!

OR cured! And uncombining their bodies and minds won't be easy. There's a huge risk of the plumber getting the snake's mind or vice versa.

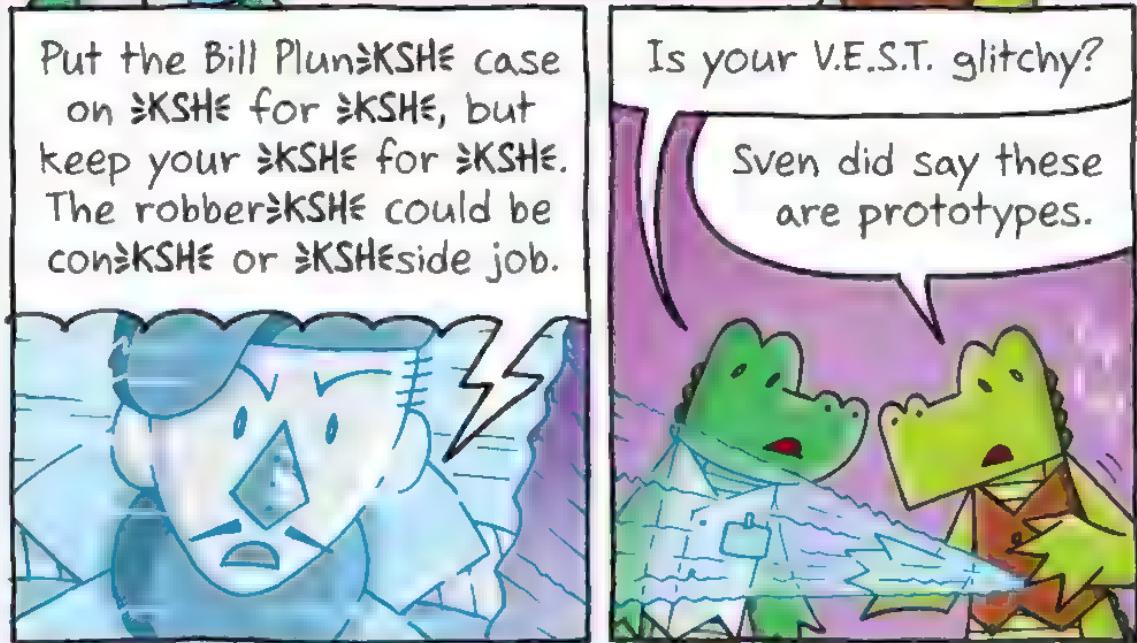
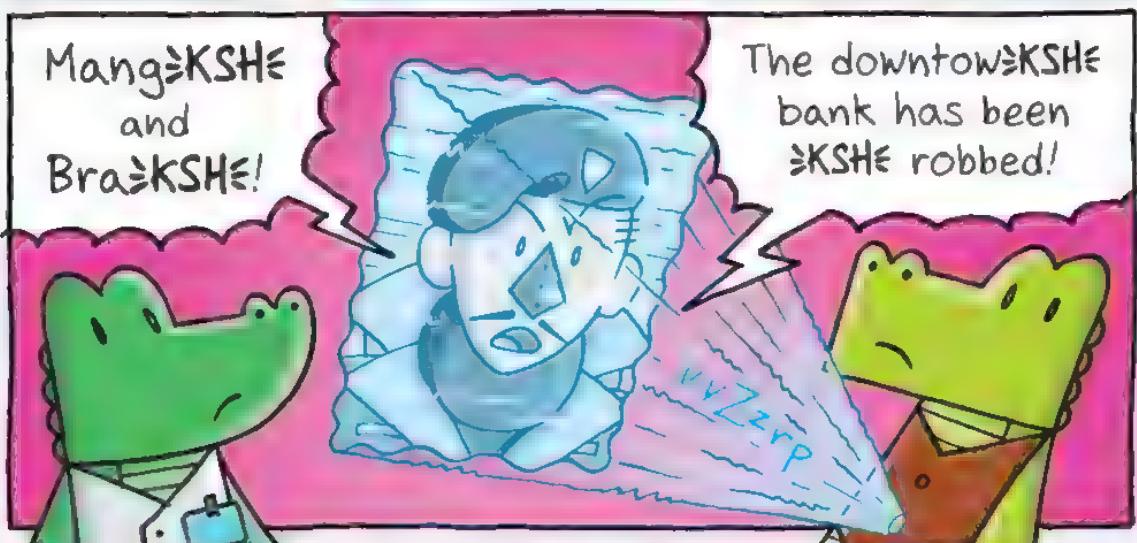
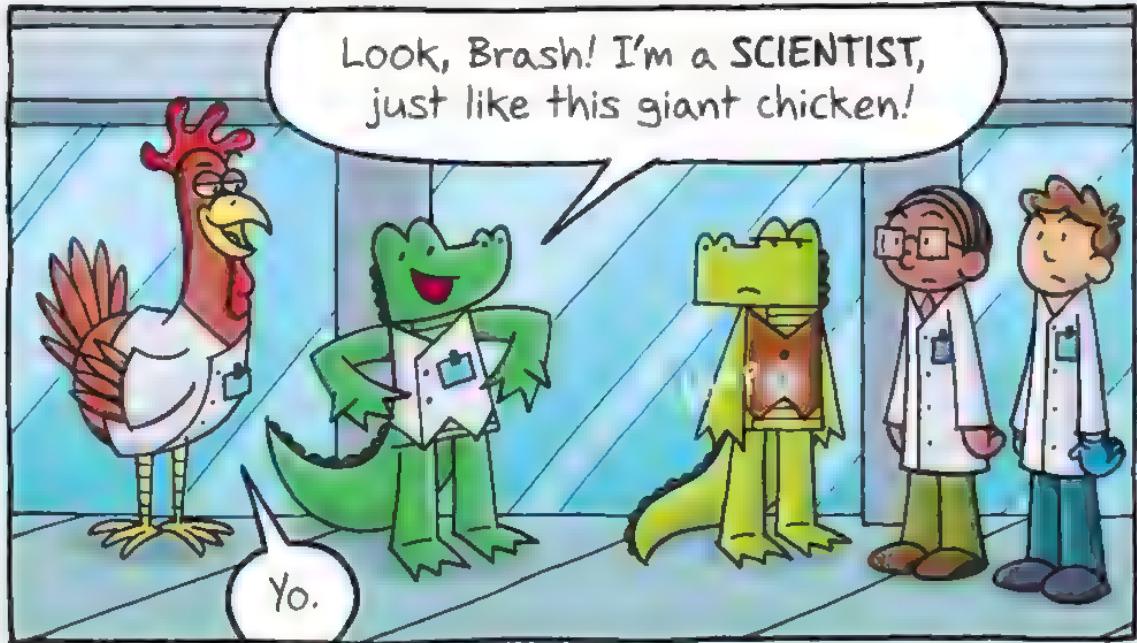
And one of them could still be combined with the drain snake tool!

But if I can invent a device that can hold both of their minds, we could extract their consciousnesses before we uncombine their bodies—and make sure the right mind winds up in the right body afterward!

Well, first we need to find this plumber-snake combo. Right, Mango?

Mango?





Go underKSHEer as INVESTMENT BANKERS
and geKSHE to the bottoKSHE of it!

Copy that!



This is the perfect opportunity to field test these V.E.S.T.s!

Aw, this outfit is BORING.
InvestigaBankers just wear gray suits.

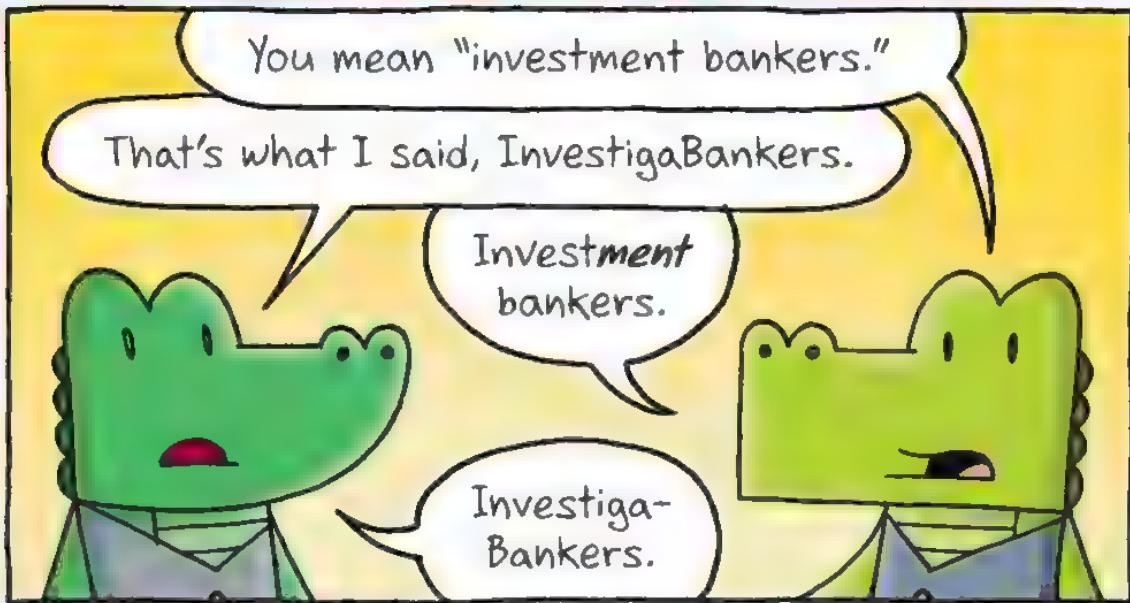


You mean "investment bankers."

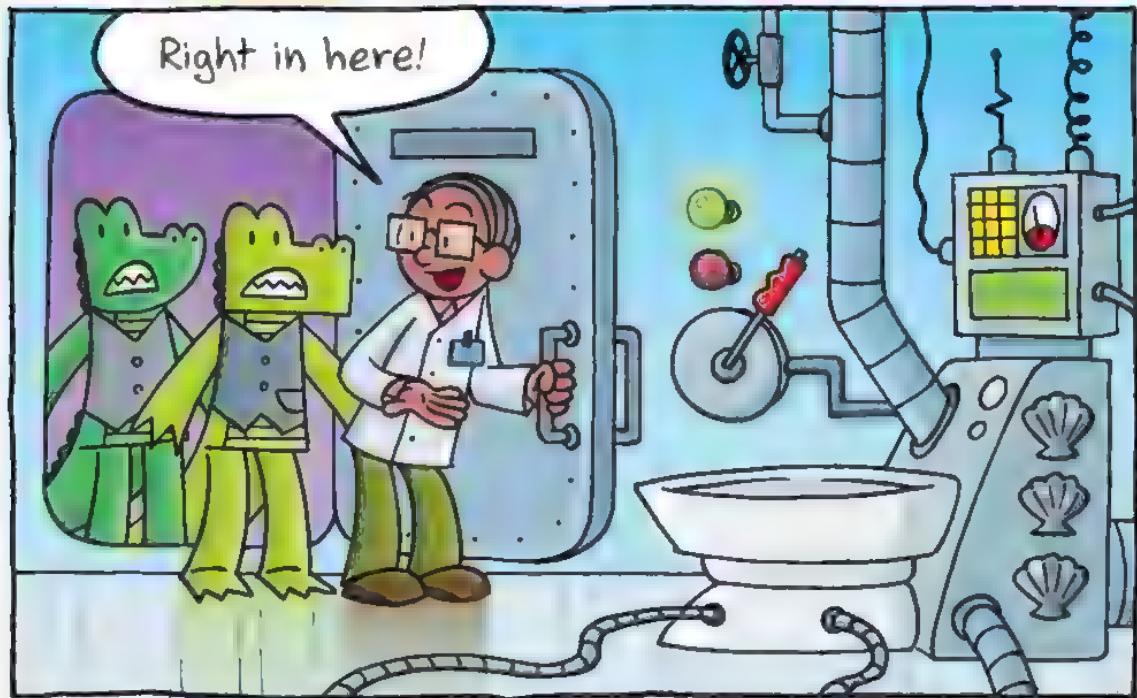
That's what I said, InvestigaBankers.

Investment
bankers.

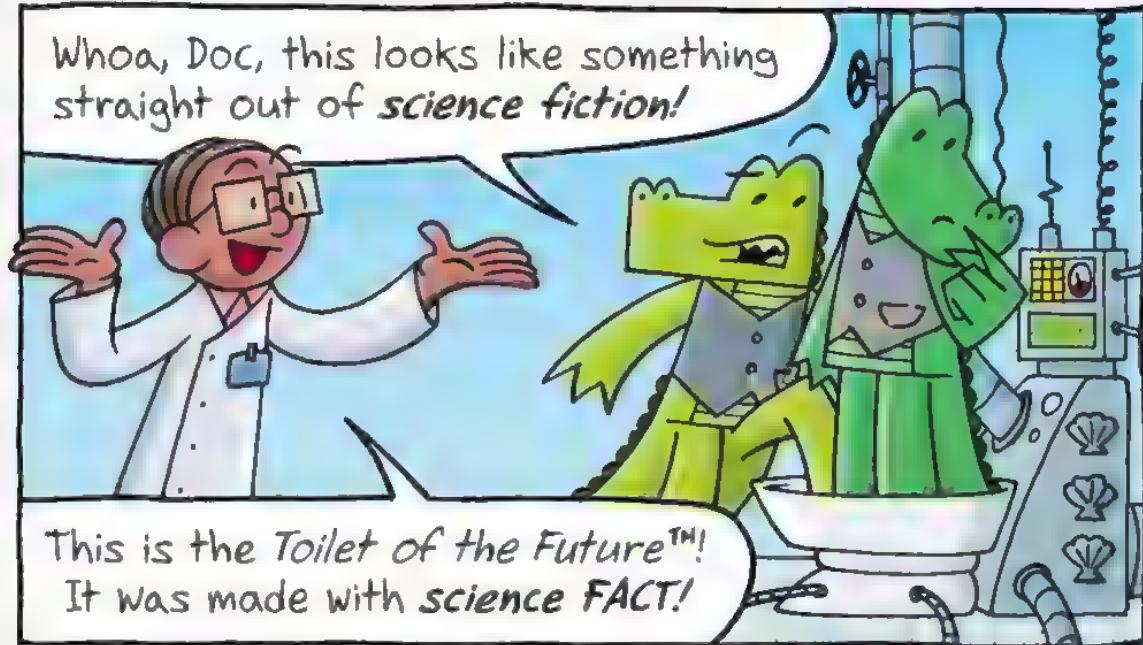
Investiga-
Bankers.



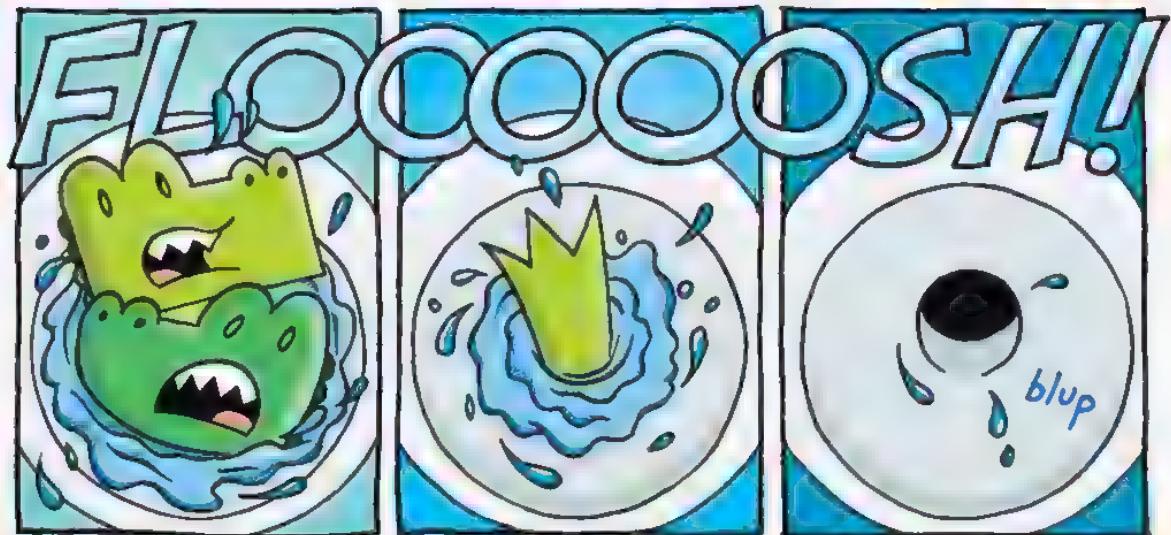
Ah, forget it. We need to get to the bank PRONTO!



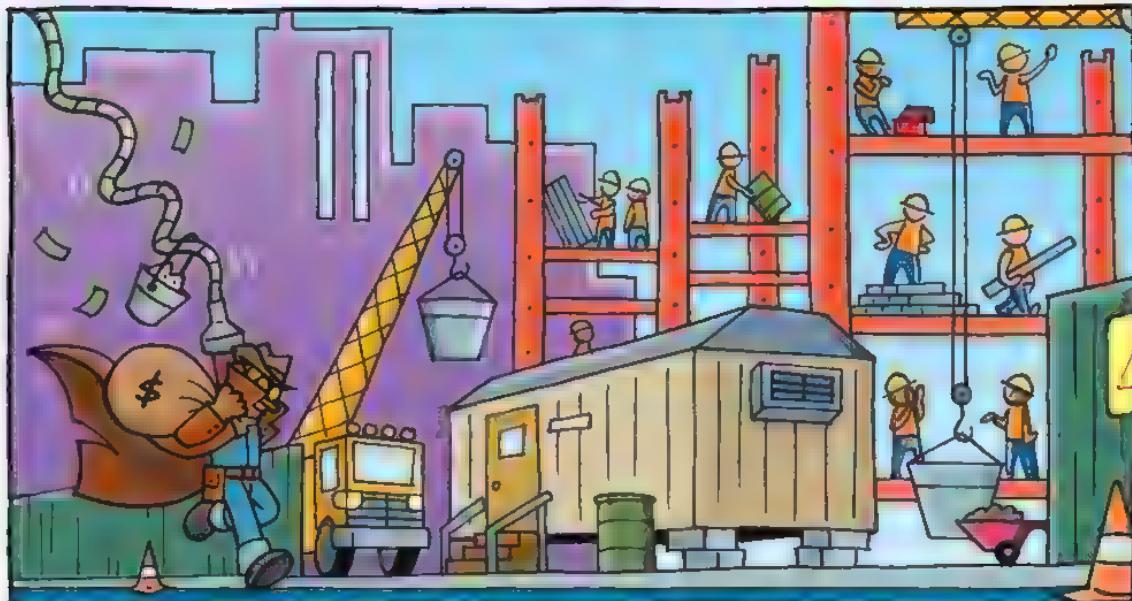
Whoa, Doc, this looks like something straight out of science fiction!



Don't worry, it's perfectly safe.



Chapter Aiden—I MEAN—8



Now repair the roof on
my secret lair—I MEAN—
the opera house!

Yeah, okay. I can
schedule your job in,
uh...six months.

WHADDYA MEAN YOU'LL DO THE JOB IN SIX MONTHS?!

No, no.
I didn't
say dat.

I said I
can *schedule*
da job in six
months.

Meaning, in half a year I can
looks at my calendar, and DEN
I can find a time dat my
crew can do your job.

So youse probably
lookin' at a whole
year from now 'fore
we can get to it.

A YEAR?!!



Aw, dis is too funny!
#AngryDoughBucket
I gotta get a picture
of youse. Heh heh!



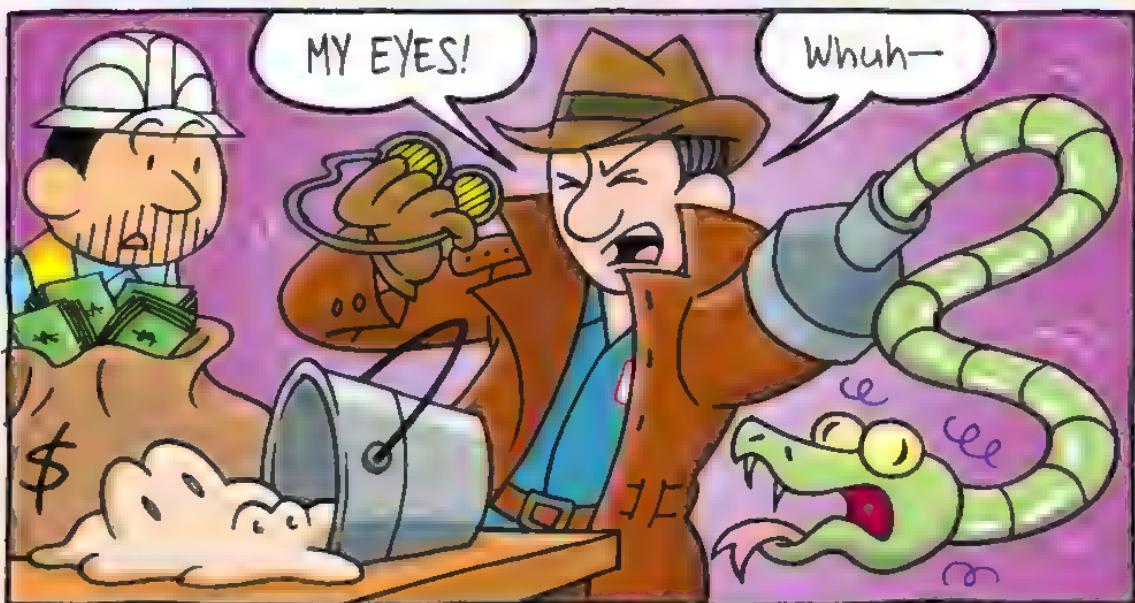
flash

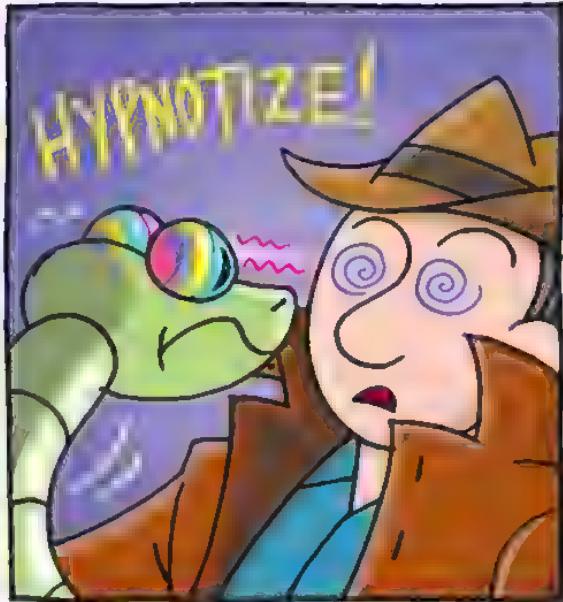
HISS

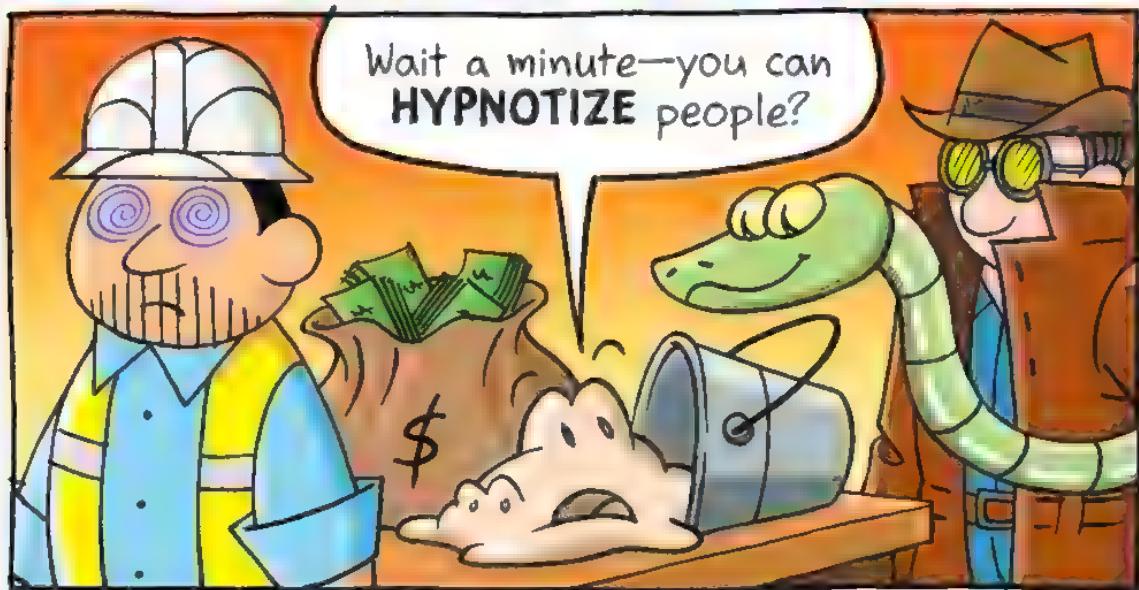


MY EYES!

Whuh—

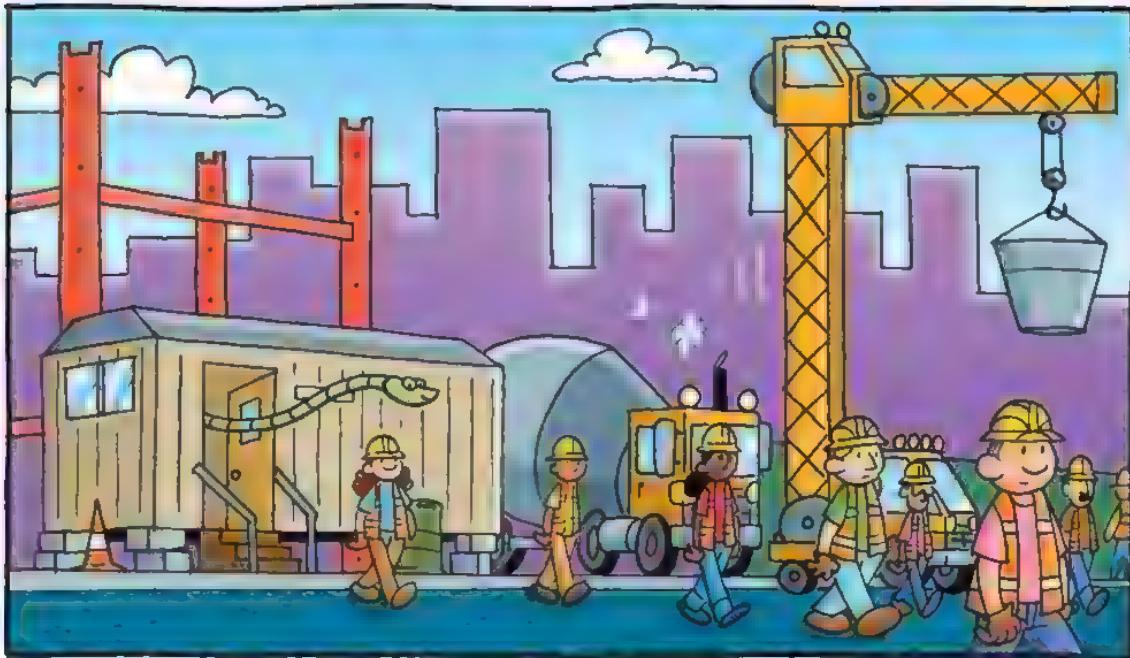
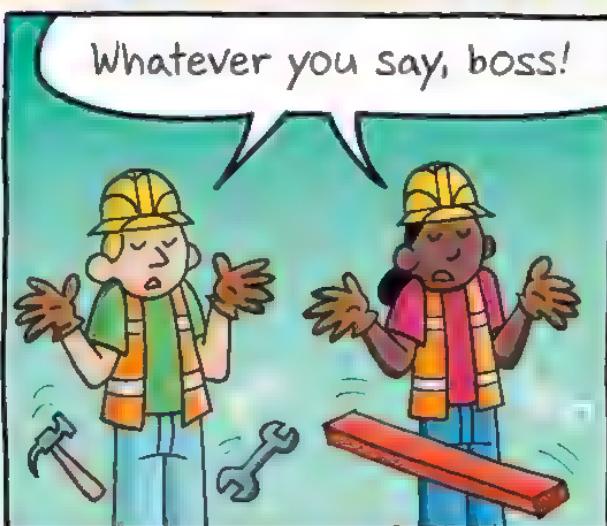






ATTENTION, CREW!

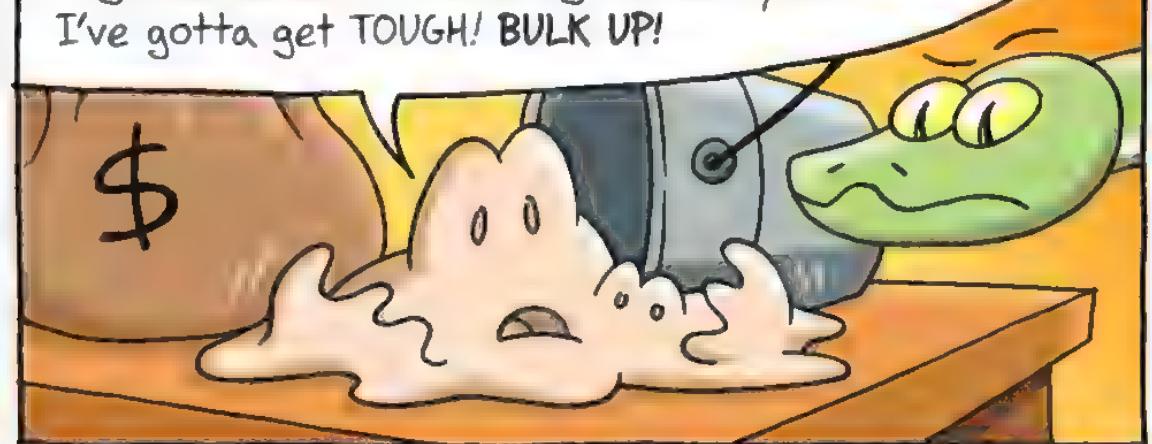
Drop what you're doing and go
repair da opera house!



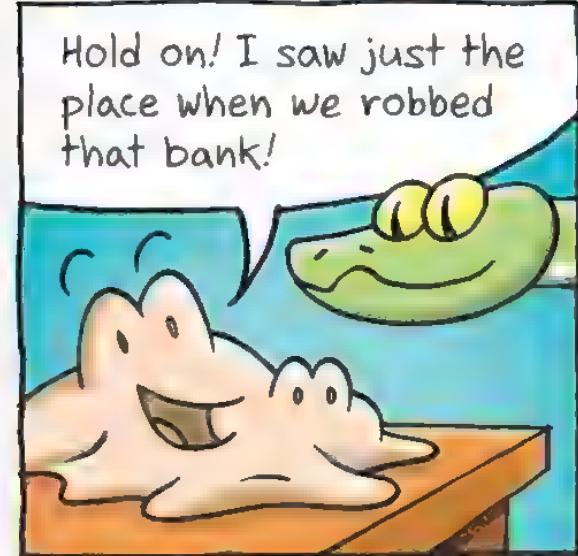
Well, that's taken care of. Now to recruit more members to **T.A.I.L.Blazers!** We can use all this money to print flyers!



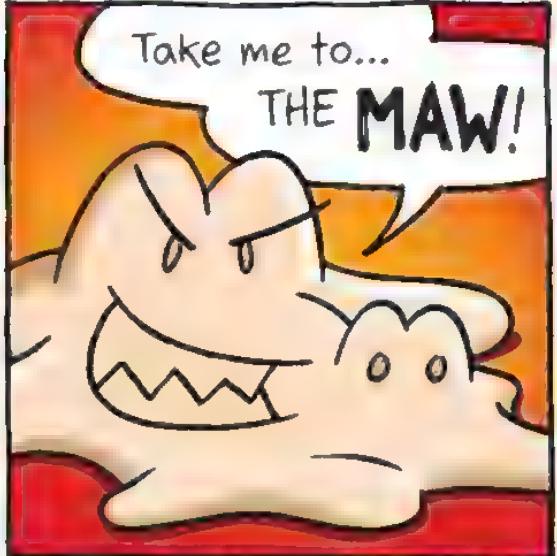
But wait... No one's going to want to join a team led by a soft pile of mush. I need to pull myself together...make something outta myself. I've gotta get TOUGH! BULK UP!



Hold on! I saw just the place when we robbed that bank!



Take me to...
THE MAW!



Chapter 9



Thanks, ma'am. We'll see what we can dough.
I mean, see what we can do.



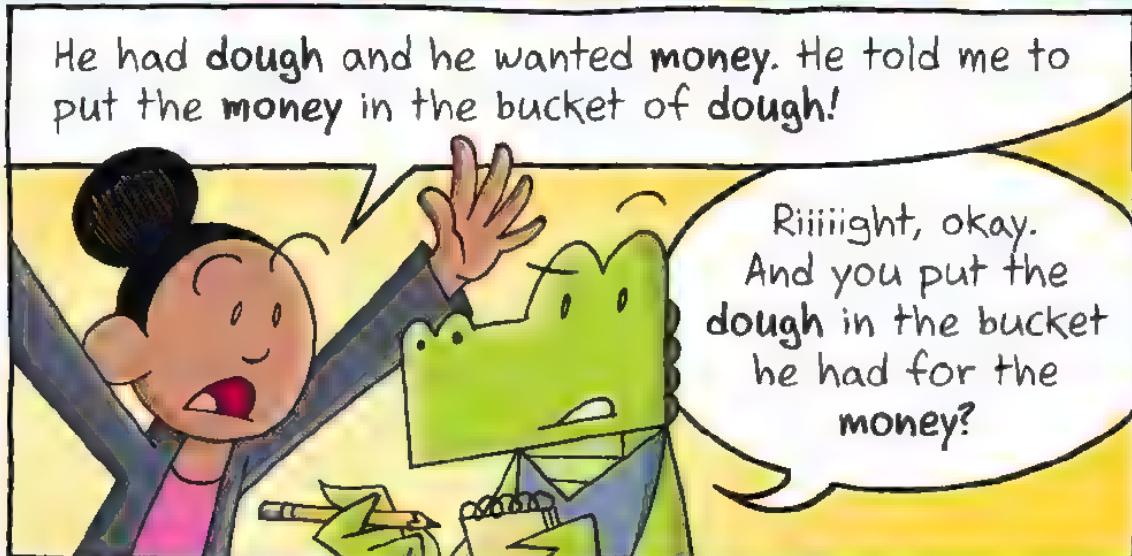
I—I need to freshen up
after all this excitement!



OH! Excuse me! You, uh,
may want to give it a
minute in there, if you
know what I mean.







No! I put the money in the bucket he had for the dough!

Isn't that exactly what I said?

What did this guy look like?

I didn't actually get a good look at him. He was disguised by a big trench coat and—

GASP! BRASH! You know who likes to rob banks and disguise himself with big coats?!

HOUDINO, THE DINOSAUR ESCAPE ARTIST!

But Mango, Houdino's in the S.U.I.T. Maximum Security Prison.

Not if he BROKE OUT!

Hmm, true.
Okay, I'll call the prison gourd.

Don't you mean prison GUARD?

I meant what I said.

RING RING

CELLBLOCK 4

You've reached the
PRISON GOURD!
Butternut Magee speaking.

Yes, I'd like to know if Houdino is still in his cell?

Okay, hold on...

YO, HOUDINO!
YOU STILL IN THERE?



Why? Who's asking?

He wants to know who's asking.

It's Mango! Hi, Houdino! How's the food in—

Beep



Okay, here's the truth: As investment bankers, which we are, we meet a lot of criminals in our line of work, which is investment banking, and—



What?

HA HA! Speaking of criminals, is there anything else you can remember about this guy in the trench coat? You know, for, uh, investment banking purposes?

Yeah, before the funny one brought up dinosaurs, I was going to say that he had a snake for an arm.



THE SNAKE-ARMED MAN!

Was this snake-arm attached to a plumber by any chance?



Uh, I really couldn't tell.

Hmm, then there's no way to be certain *THIS* is the same snake-armed man we're looking for.

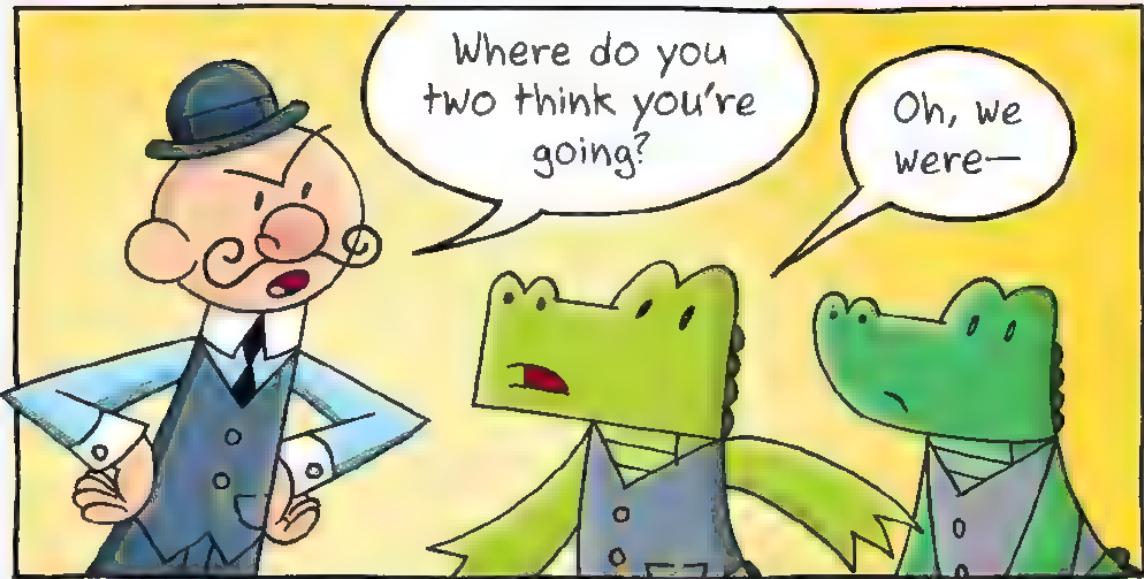
Mango, how many snake-armed men do you think there are?!

OF COURSE this is the one we're looking for.

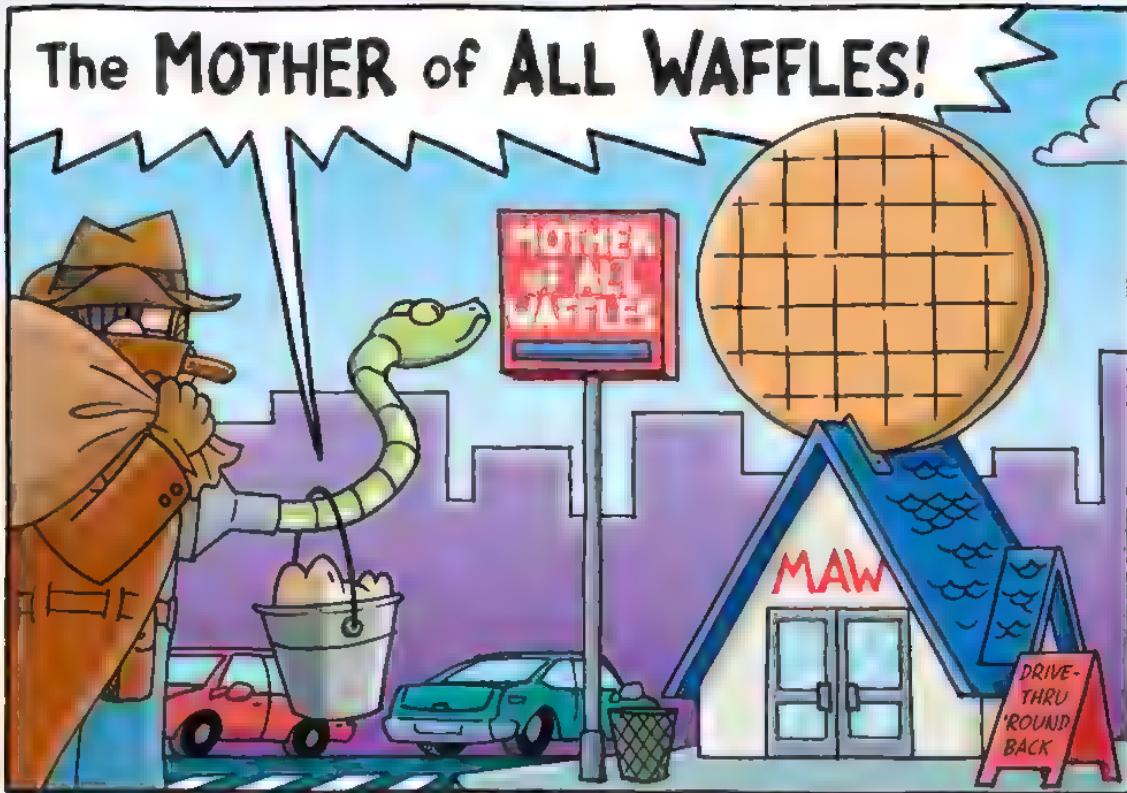
Shouldn't we get back to work? I'm pretty sure our breaks are over by now.

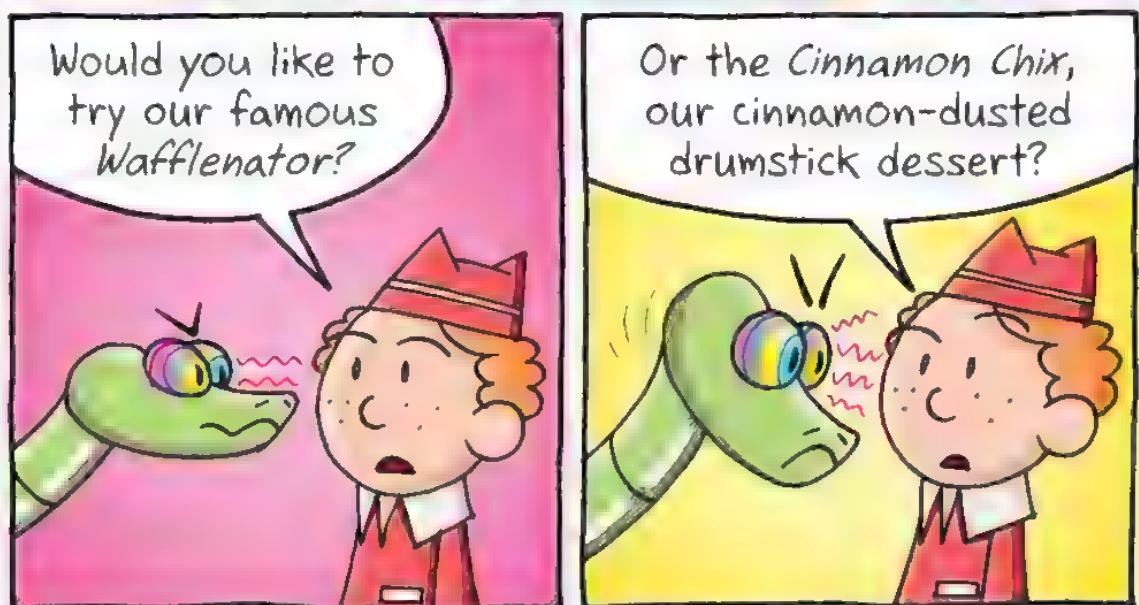
Yes, right! Back to business! And there's no place investment bankers do **business** better than in the *bathroom!*

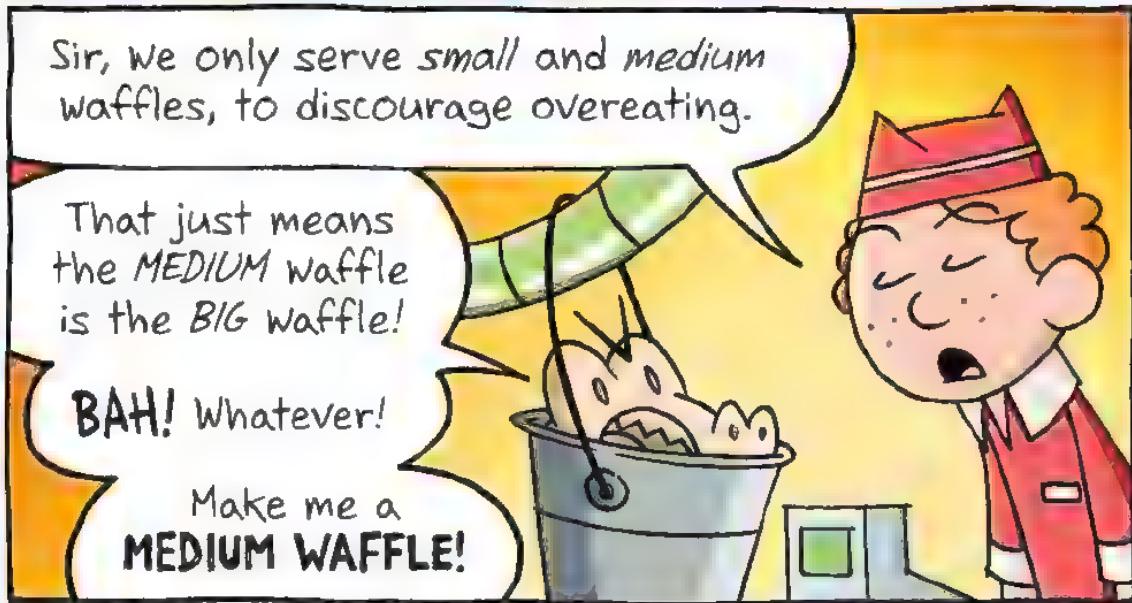
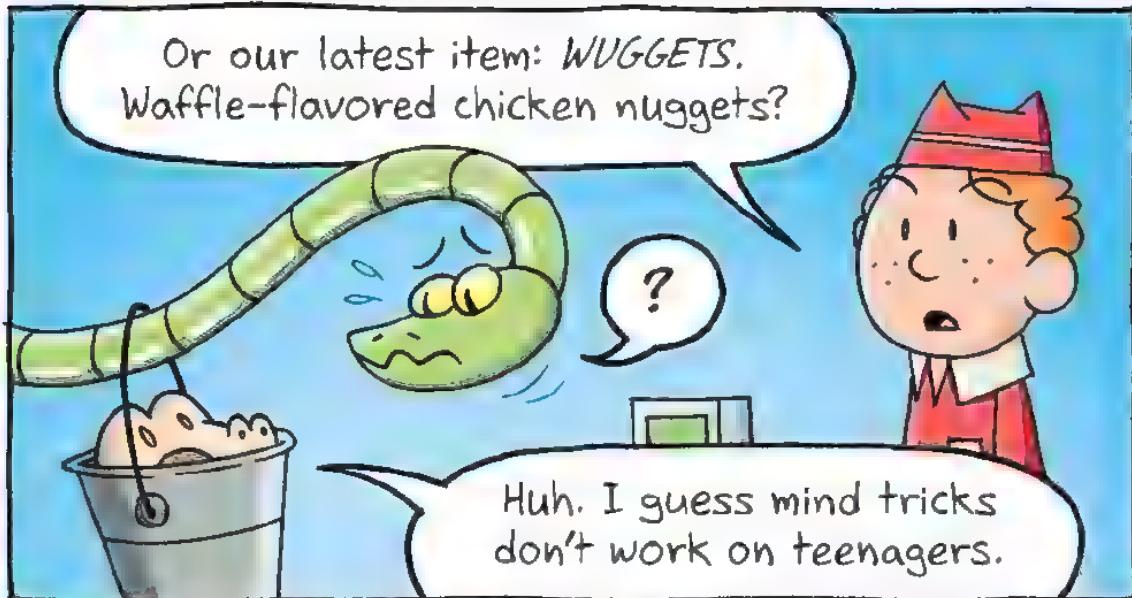
C'mon, Mango!

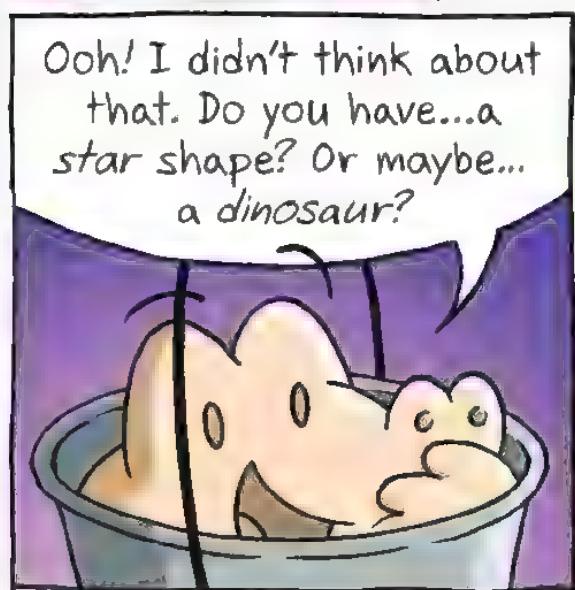
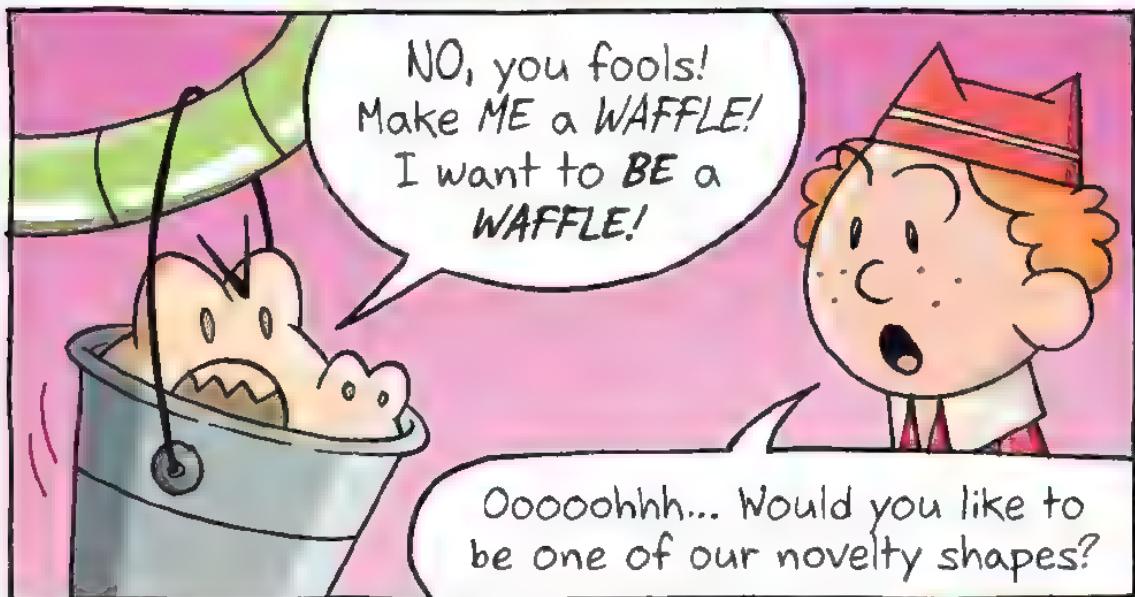


Chapter 10



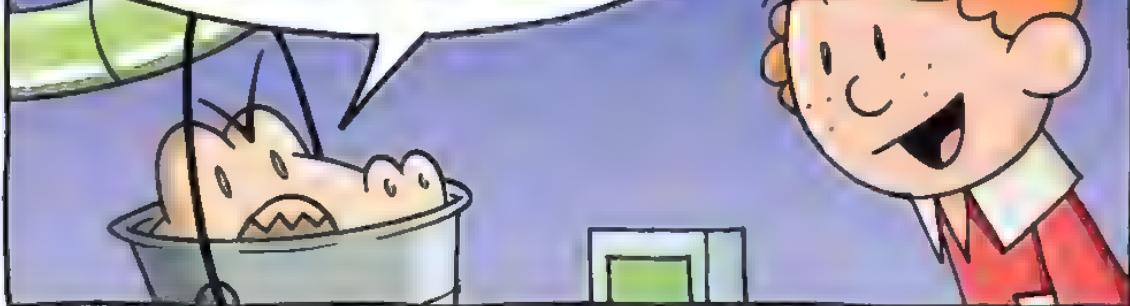






WHAT? Neither of those shapes are NOVEL! Ugh, fine, I've already been a square cracker, so make me into **ONE MEDIUM ROUND WAFFLE!**

Okeydokey!

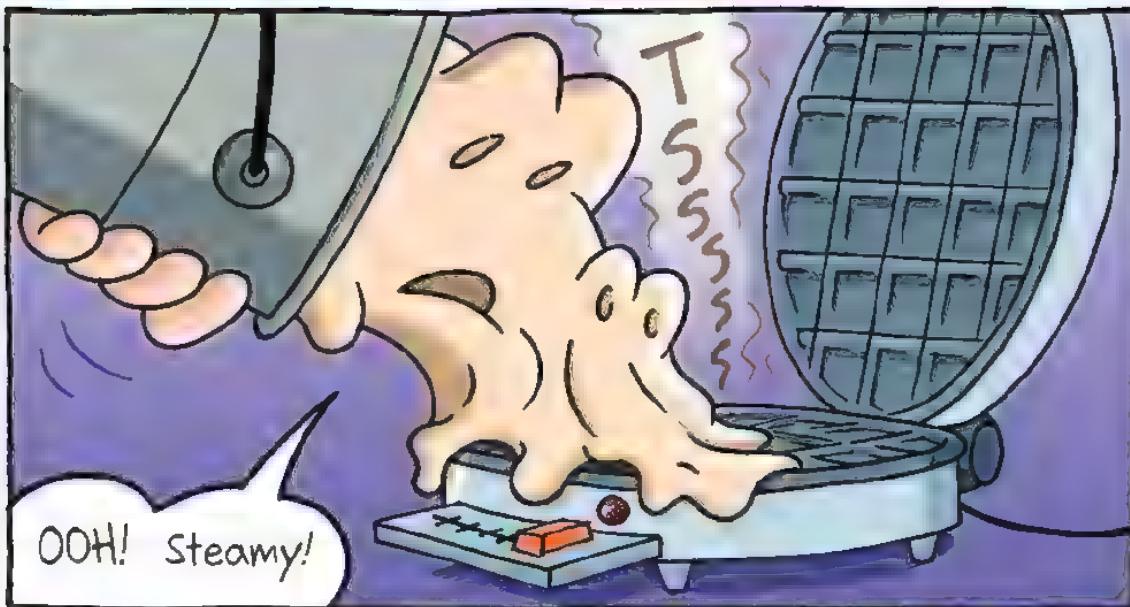


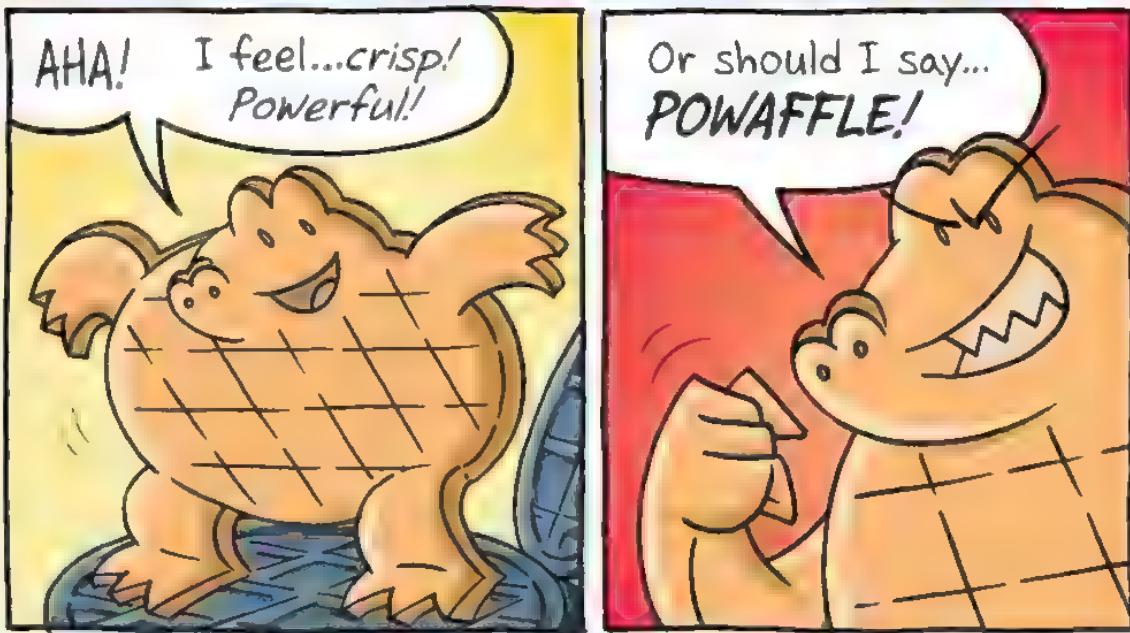
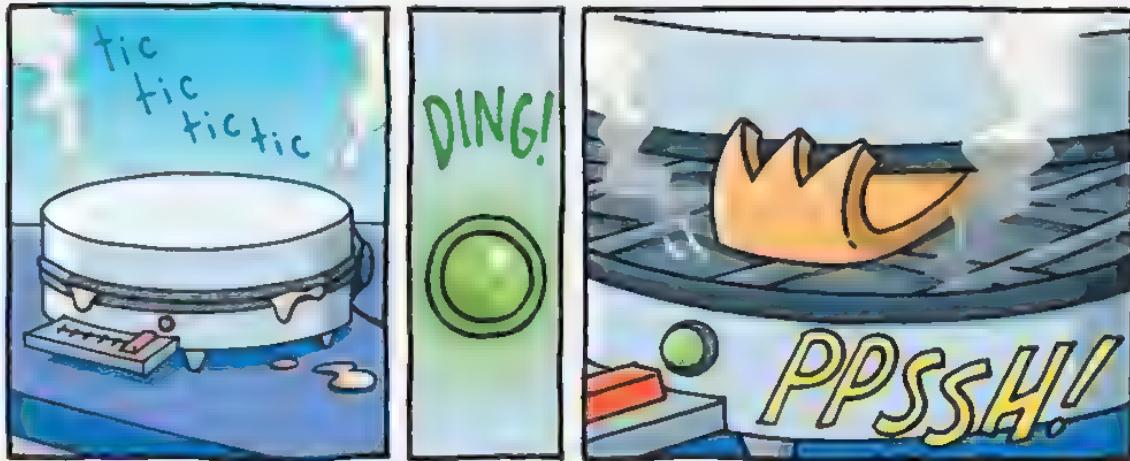
GOOD! NOW, HAND OVER THE DOUGH!



No, not the **MONEY!** This time I mean hand **ME** over!







Everyone say #SnakeArm selfie!

What the—?!
STOP THAT!



Aw, he's so adorable!
I'm gonna
'gram him!

I'm no graham cracker!
I'm no cracker at
all, anymore! I'm
WAFFLEDILE!



Hookline and Slinker!

Stop social-media-izing!
We're trying to keep a
low profile! ARGH!



Chapter 11

...and at THIS point, we'll be bankrupt!

Ugh, when
will this end?

Do you have something to share
with the rest of the room?

YEAH! This
meeting is
BORING!

All we're doing is staring
at charts and drinking
bad coffee!

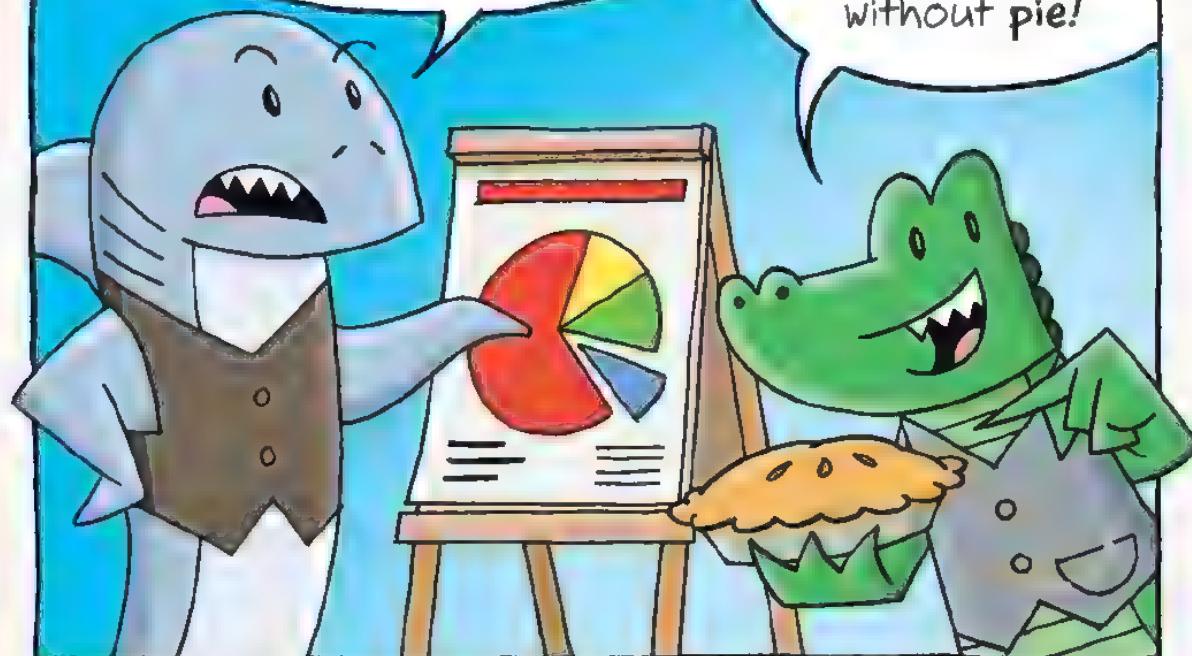
Can't something be
done to liven it up?

I KNOW! A MONTAGE!

♪♪ Bankers really like to make charts of money! ♪♪

I see nothing wrong
with that.

But you can't
have a pie chart
without pie!



♪ Terrible coffee makes their farts smell funny! ♪

Pee-yew!

Funny strange, or
funny ha ha?

This is why
I drink tea.

POOT



🎵 There's nothing duller than talking finance! 🎵

Dull is good.
Sharp things are
dangerous!

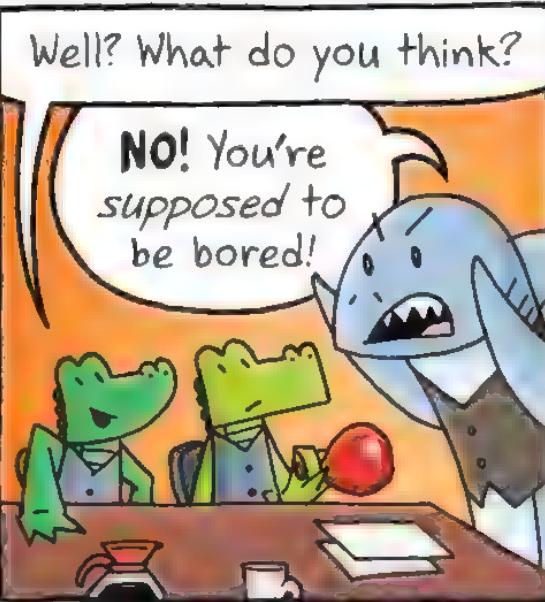
Yeah, like your
teeth and his wit!

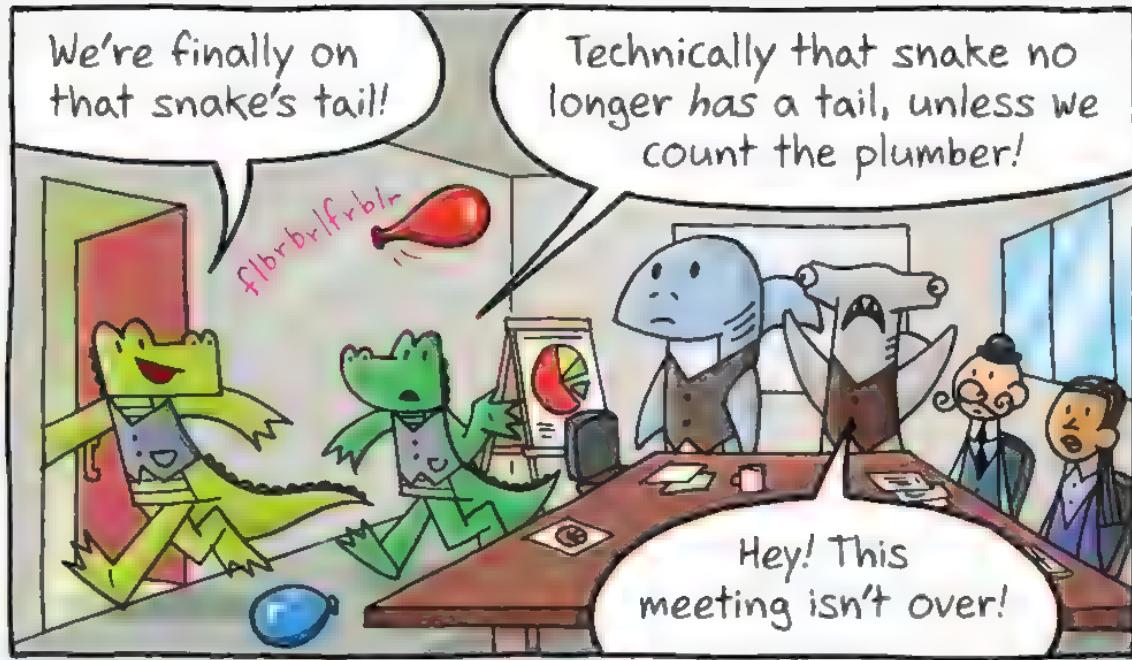
🎵 So instead get up on the table and dance! 🎵

Come on! There
could even be
balloons!

The only tables I get
on are multiplication
tables!

pfff

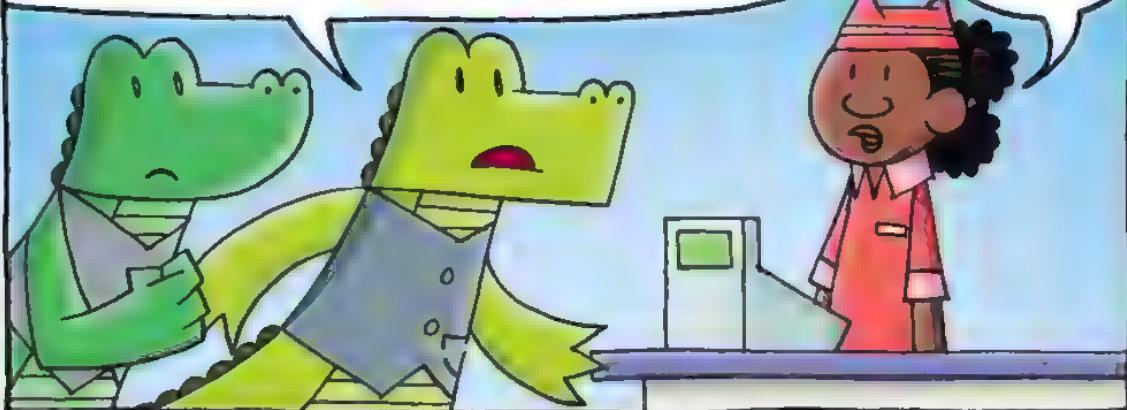




Moments later, a few blocks away from the bank...

We heard about the snake-armed man demanding waffles! Where is he?

This is MAD.



Yeah, it sounds pretty wild, right?

No, sir, THIS is MAD. Mother of All DONUTS.

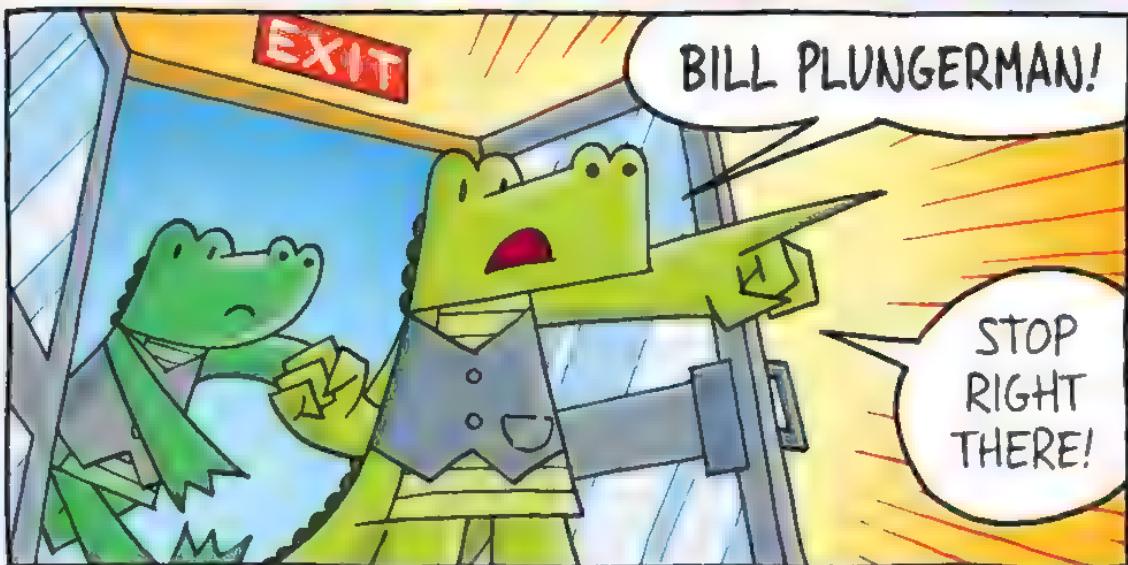
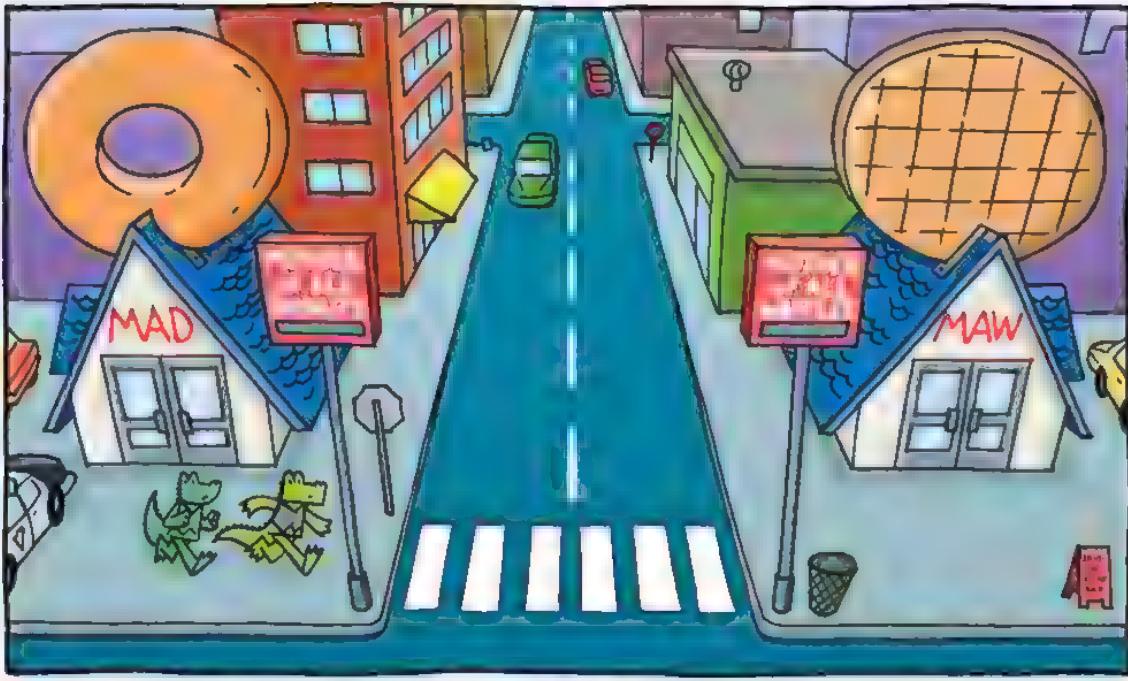


You want the MAW, Mother of All WAFFLES, across the street.

BOOMCHOCO DO-DONUTS

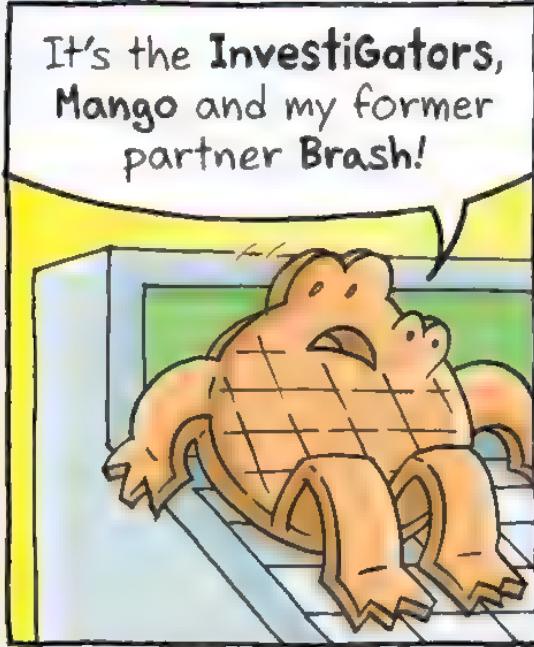
DUMJELLS



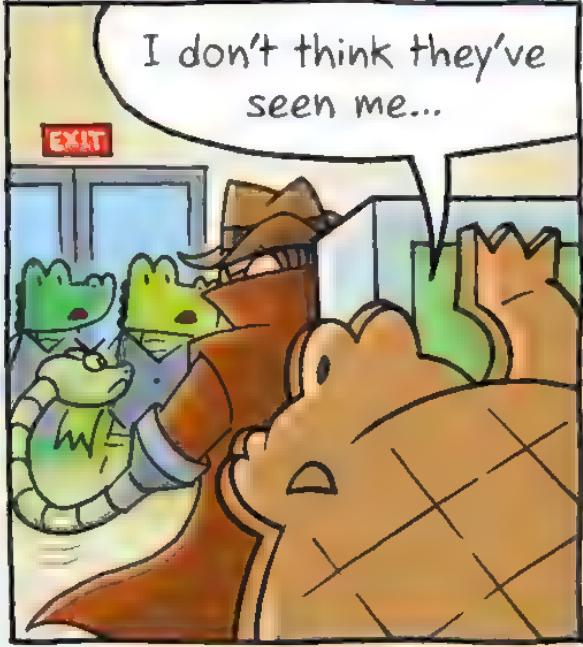




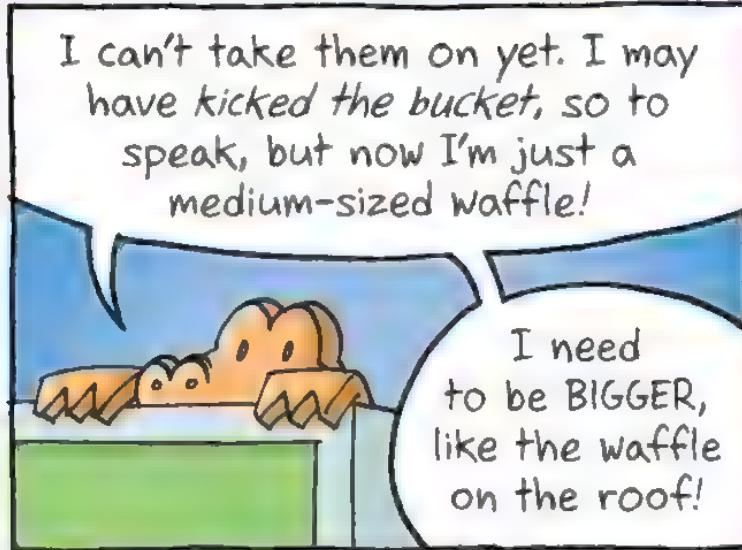
It's the **InvestiGators**,
Mango and my former
partner Brash!



I don't think they've
seen me...

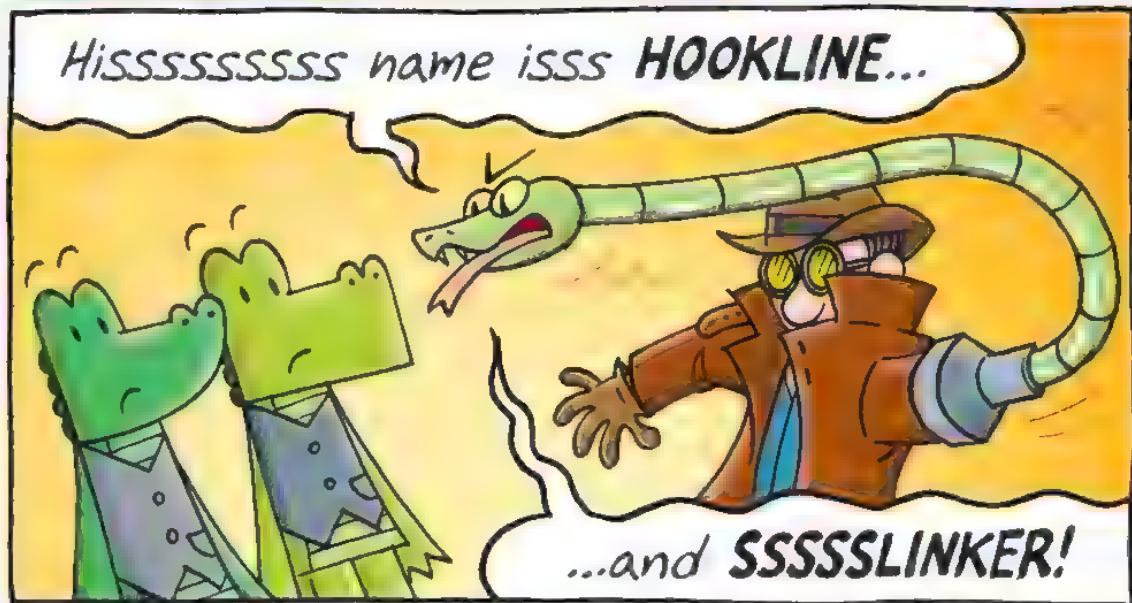
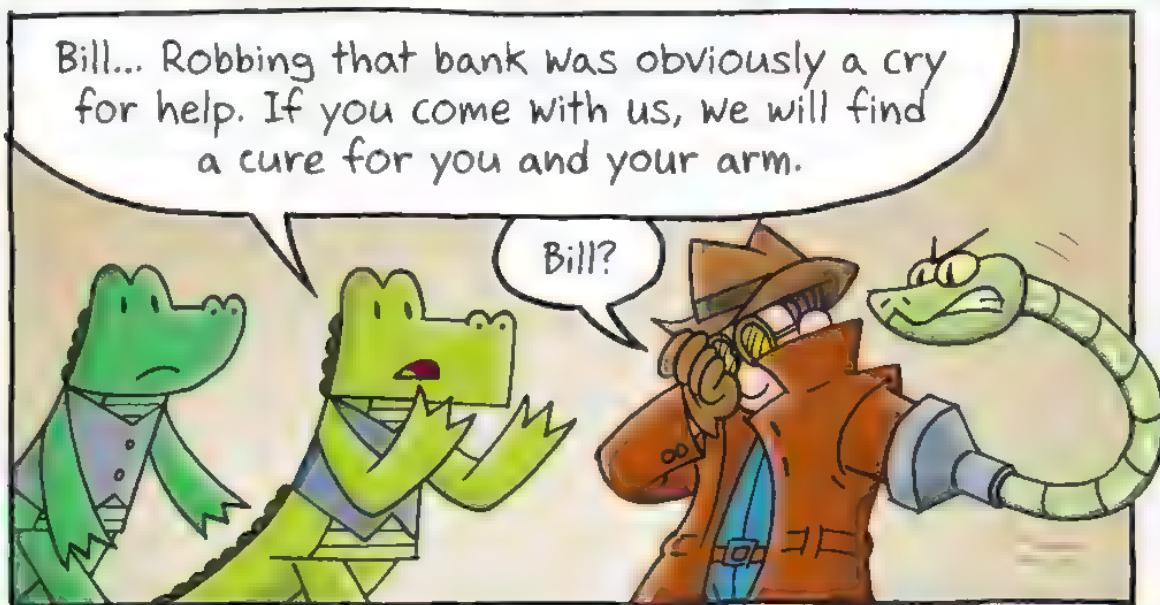
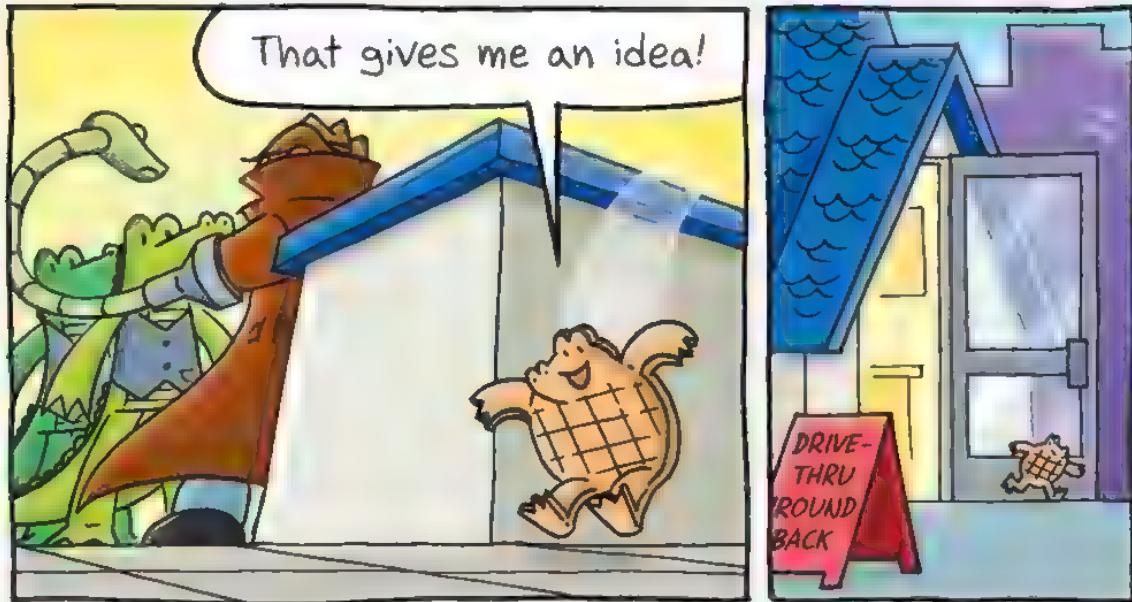


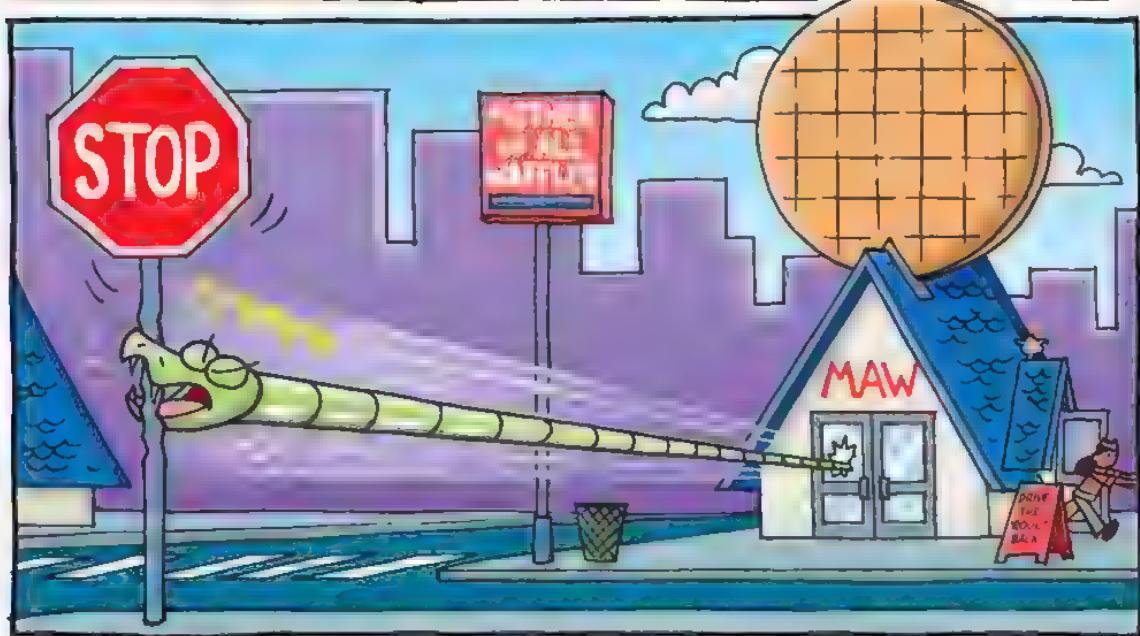
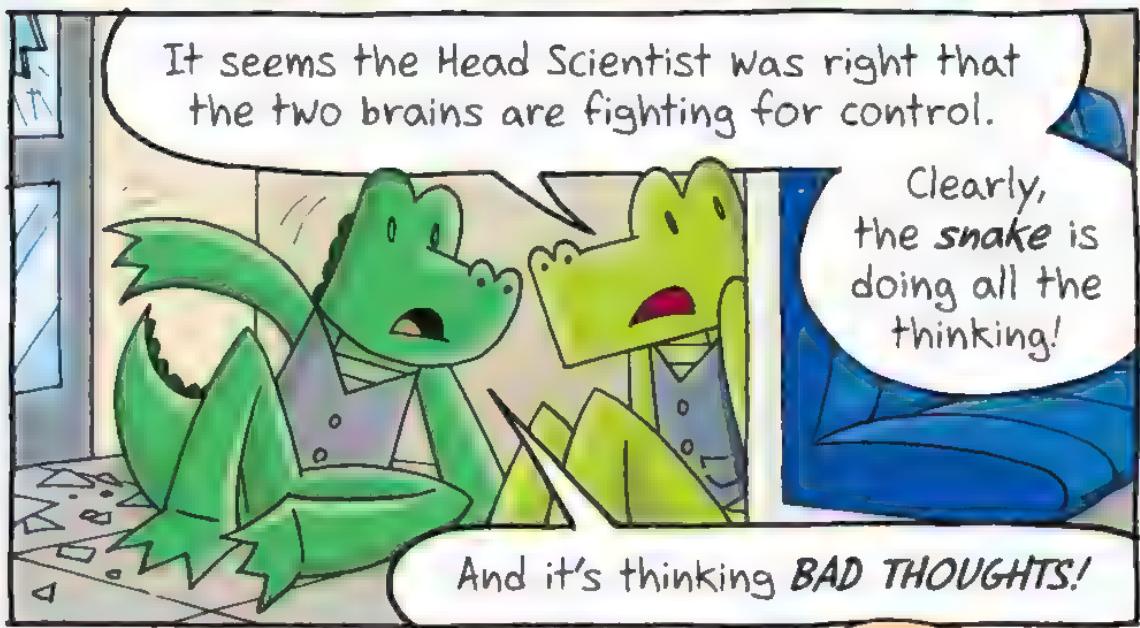
I can't take them on yet. I may have kicked the bucket, so to speak, but now I'm just a medium-sized waffle!



Wait a sec...



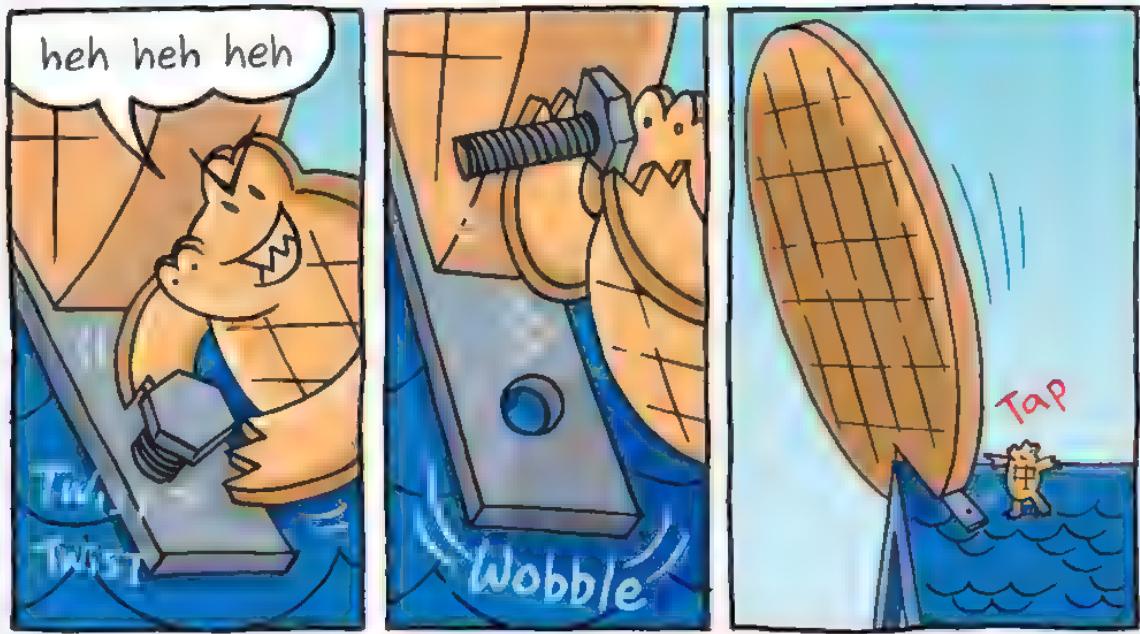
















Are you mad
that I saved
you?

I'm not mad, just...disappointed.
Stopping the **bad guy** is the mission,
not saving your partner.

You mean like how **YOU** didn't save your partner
Daryl from falling into radioactive saltine dough
and turning into **Crackerdile**?

Excuse me
for not wanting my
partner to presumably
die only to come back
flattened and looking
for revenge!

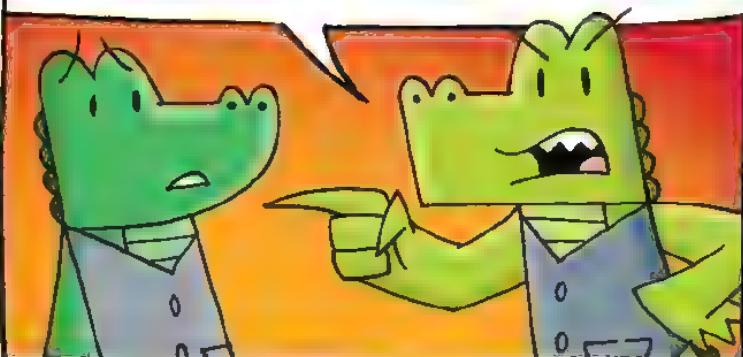
I—I'm sorry, Brash...
That was a low blow.

No, Mango. You're right.

Sometimes looking out for your partner is the mission.



After all, I've had to look out for you, since you're always one step away from blowing our cover. AND I've had to keep a lookout for Daryl ever since he became evil.

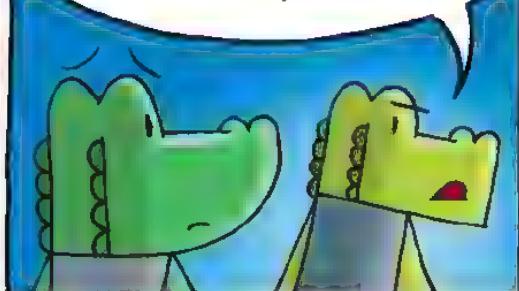


Well... I guess I don't have to look out for **THAT** partner anymore, since he's gone forever.

Brash—



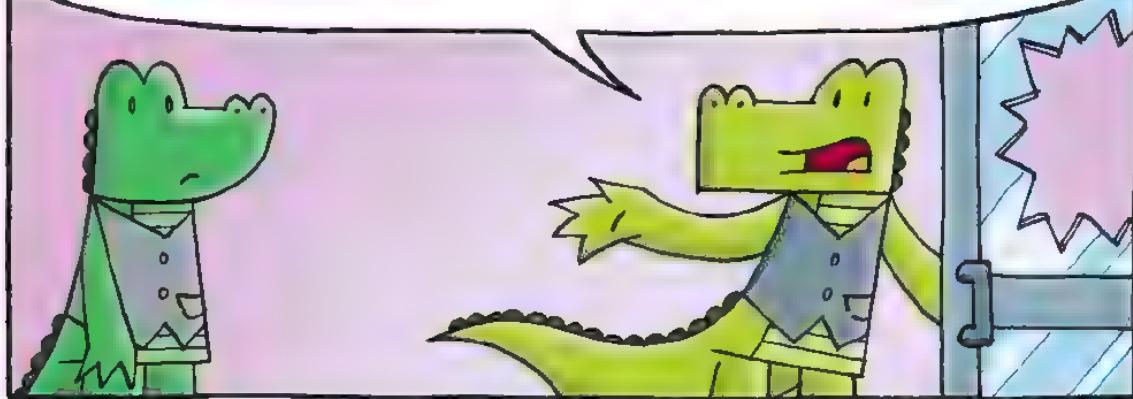
Being a secret agent isn't easy, Mango. I've had to make a lot of tough decisions for the **Greater Good**. You will, too.



Wh-Where are you going?



I'm going inside to see if the employees can tell me why Hookline and Slinker had such a craving for waffles that they had to rob a bank.



Plus, that giant waffle shouldn't have fallen over. Something's not adding up, and it's my mission to find out what.



Perhaps you want to think about your mission out here for a while.



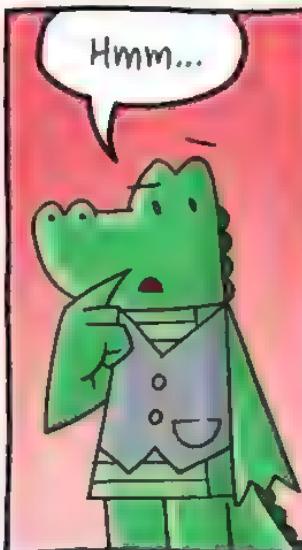


FANTASTIC FOREMAN

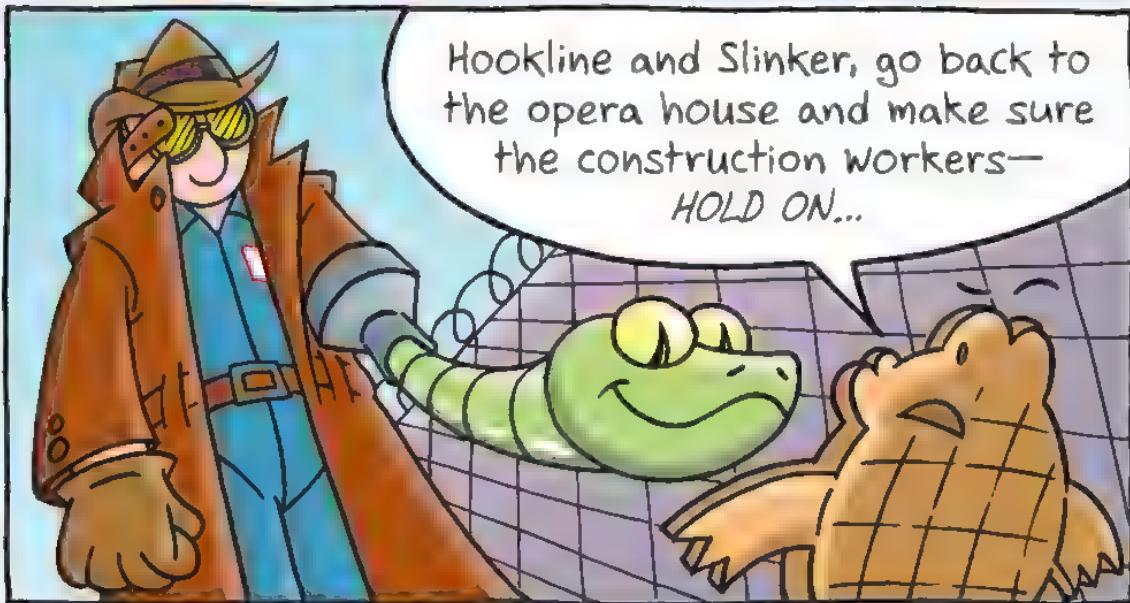


Dreamt a guy with a
#snakearm made me
tell my construction
crew to repair the
opera house!

Construction crew...?
The opera house?! We
gotta get over there!



Chapter 12





In the meantime,
I've got to figure
out a way to
get *BIG*...

I could...find a gym?
Work out? Pump iron?
Take some vitamins?
GMOs? Bovine growth
hormone?

Make a wish at a
carnival game down
on the boardwalk?

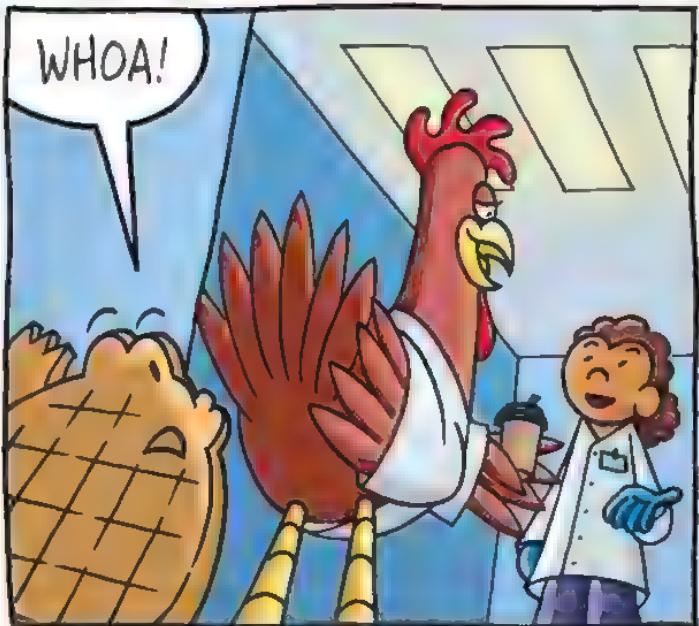
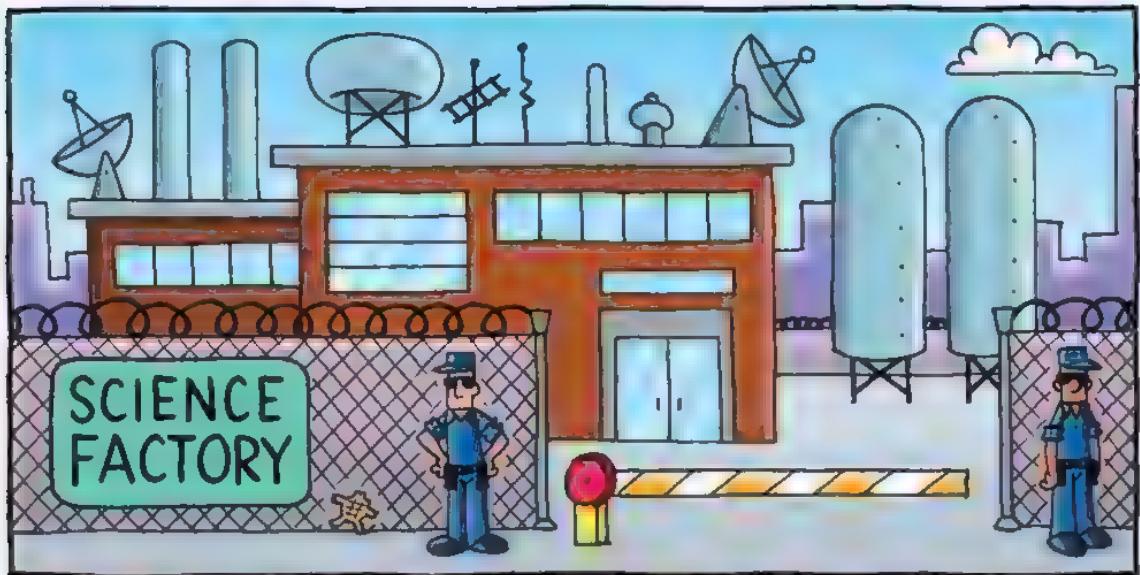
Nah. Those all
sound like work!

If only there was an
effortless solution to
my dilemma...

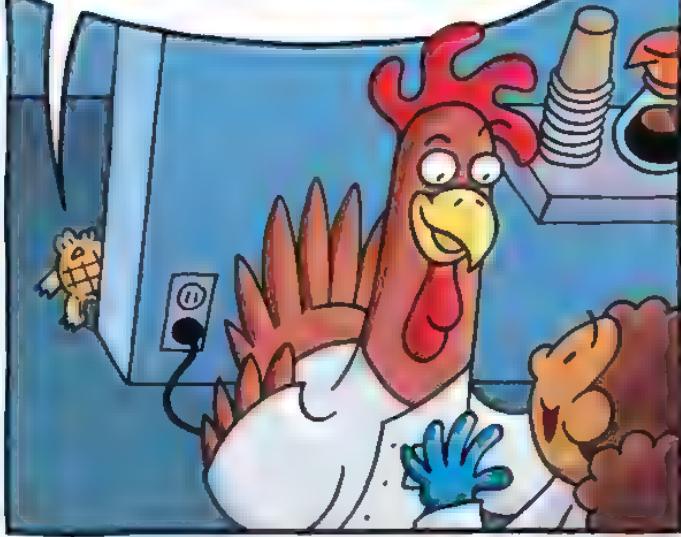
AHA! The **SCIENCE**
FACTORY! They've got
plenty of solutions
in there!

Especially in
the chemistry
aisle!

SCIENCE
FACTORY



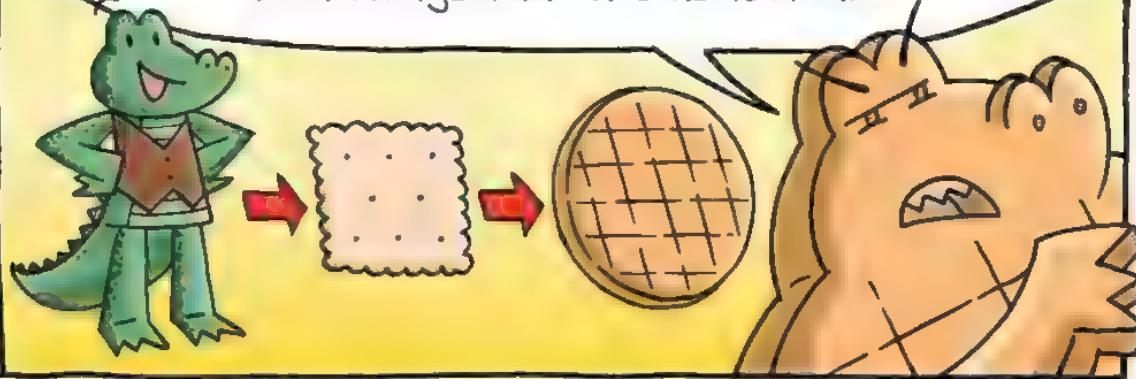
That's the biggest chicken I've ever seen!



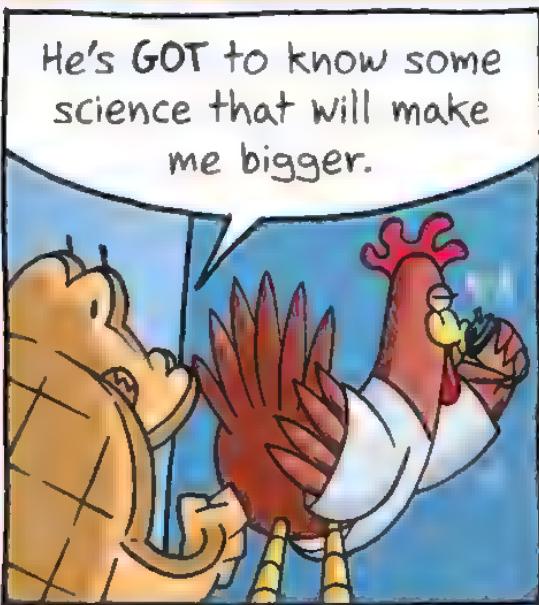
Of course, at this size, everything looks bigger than I've ever seen!

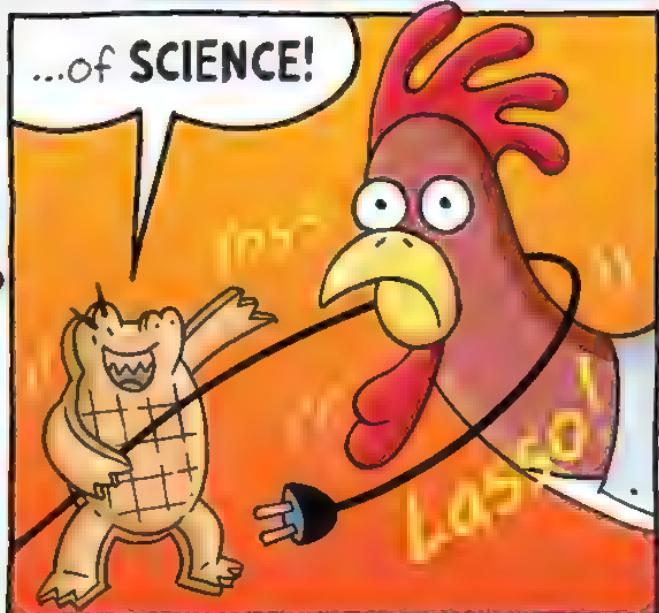
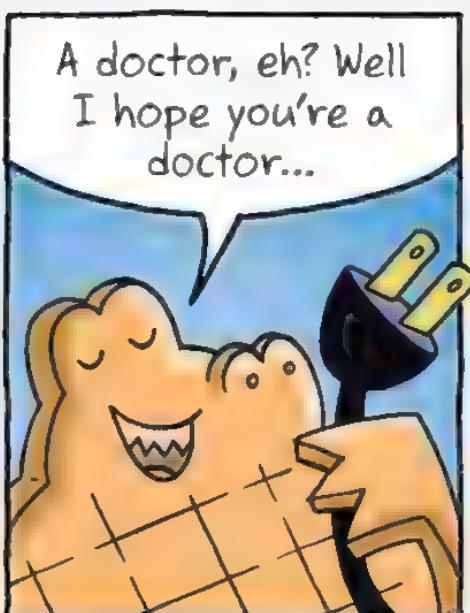
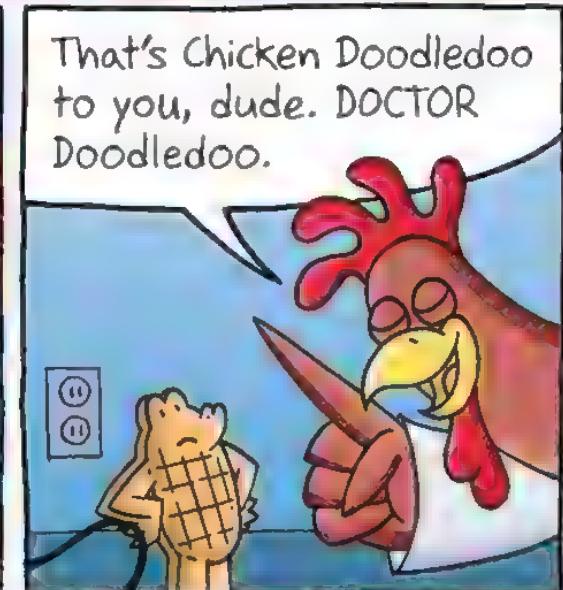
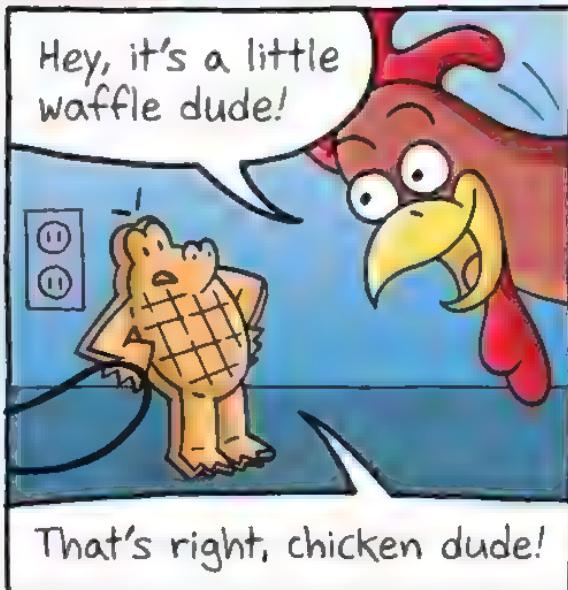


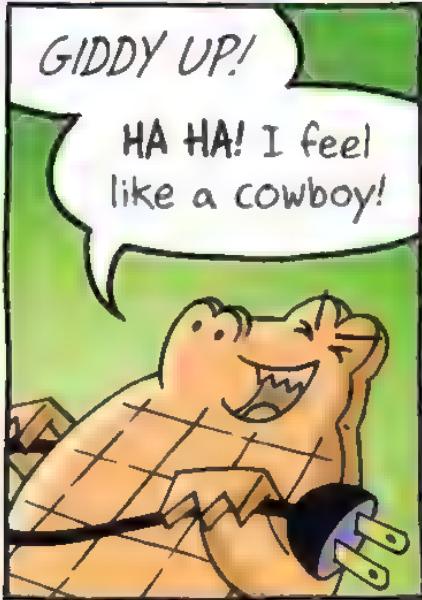
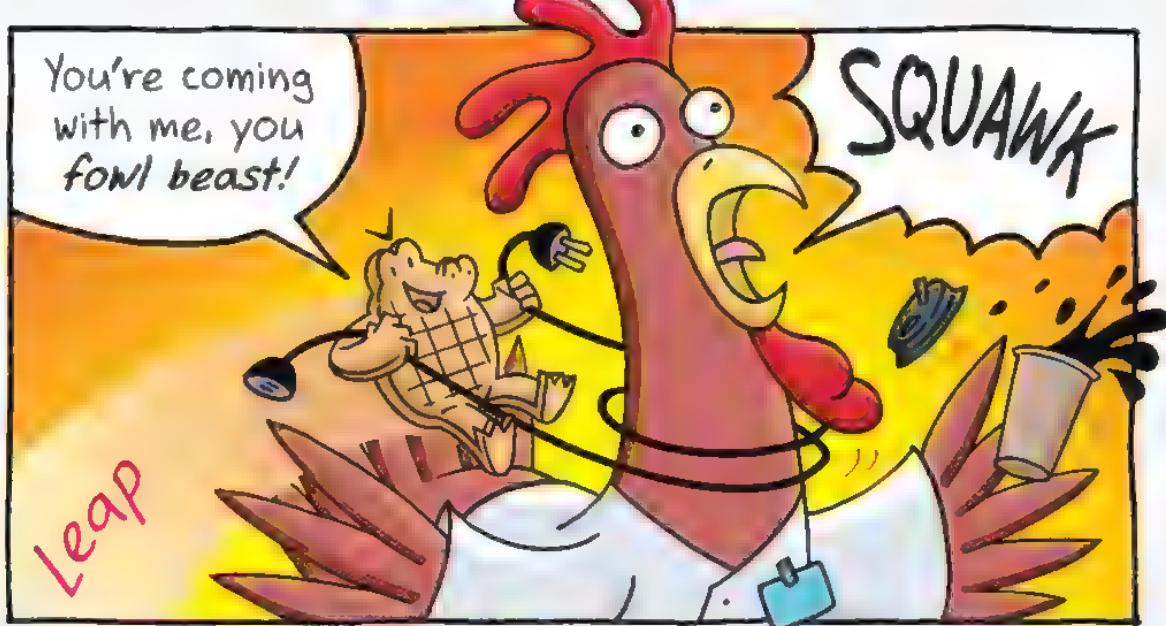
But as a **crocodile** who turned into a **cracker** who turned into a **waffle**, I've got a little experience with things that are abnormal!

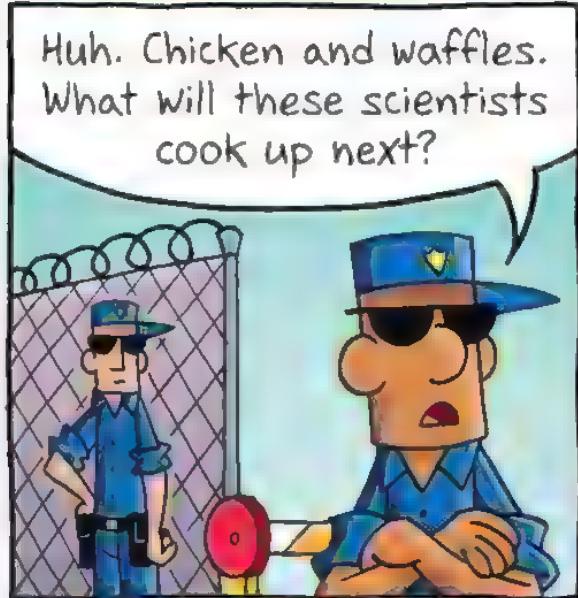
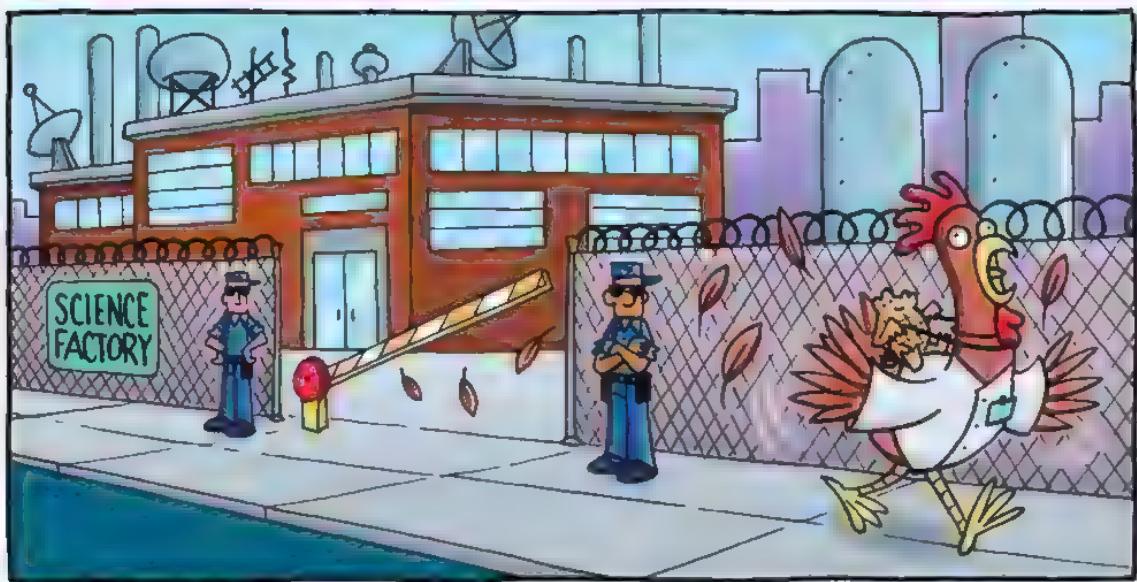


He's GOT to know some science that will make me bigger.









Chapter 13

Back at the MAW...



What a mess. Well, at least we recovered the stolen money...



AHEM!

Oh, uh...



I was just making sure it was all there!

Right...



Now, does anyone know why the snake-armed man came into the MAW?



He wanted us to make him a waffle.



So he was just buying waffles with the money he stole from the bank?

No, we made the DOUGH into a waffle.

The dough? You mean you made waffles out of the money?

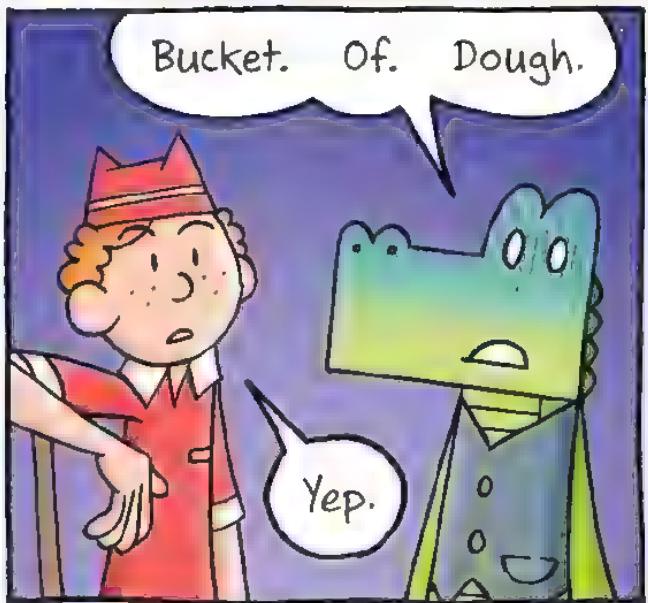


Not "money" dough. He had a bucket of actual dough! Like baking dough.



Bucket. Of. Dough.

Yep.



Was it...CRACKER dough?!

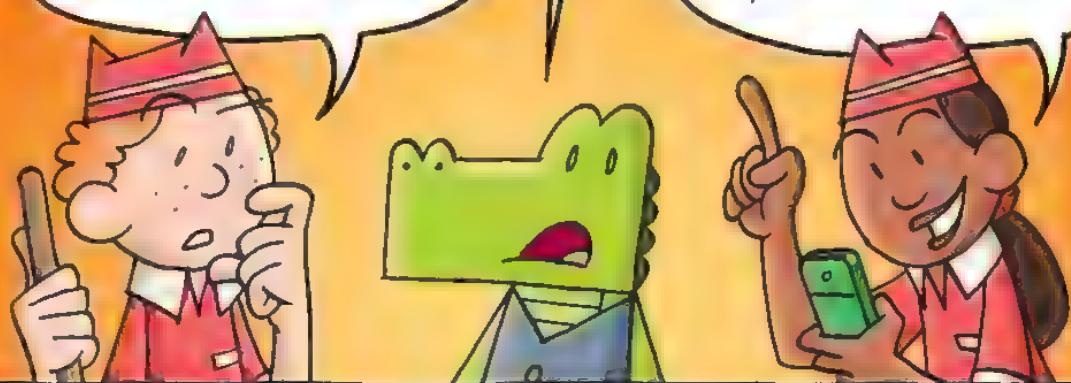
I dunno, he just said to make him into a waffle! We made him into one of our novelty shapes.



Novelty shape? Like a star? Or a dinosaur?

No, no, the shape was...uh...um...

Oh, wait! I got a picture of him!

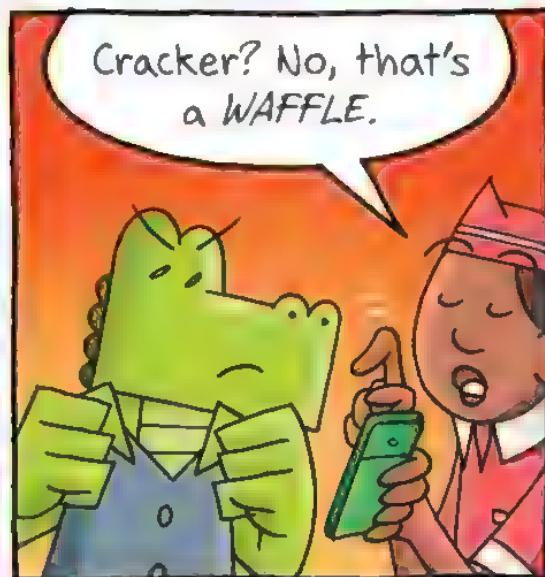
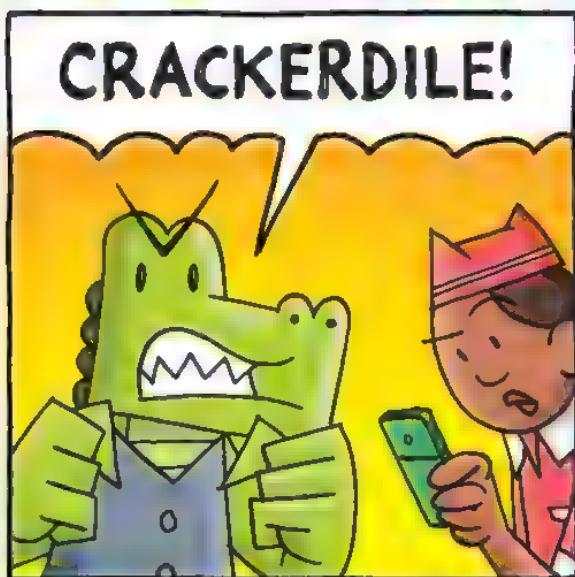


Hold on...nope...nope...
Not that one...



Here we go! He's ROUND!







Hold on... If Hookline and Slinker brought Crackerdile to the MAW to be made into a waffle...then Crackerdile must be the one calling the shots!

HE'S the mastermind behind the bank robbery!

THAT'S what the bank teller meant by "bucket of dough"! How could I be so dense?

Crackerdile couldn't have needed ALL that money to get waffle-ized... So what was it for?

I should head back to the bank in case I missed any clues.

And hopefully that's where Mango went as well!



Man! That investment banker sure is in a hurry!



All units, we have a BOLO for a chicken and waffle! Repeat, Be On the Look Out for a chicken and waffle!



CHICKEN AND WAFFLES?! I know just where to go!



Yeah, I'd like a Wafflenator
with a wing, thigh, and
extra syrup!



What?



Chapter 14



But what would a snake-armed plumber want with an opera house?



Are these repairs what Hookline and Slinker robbed that bank for?

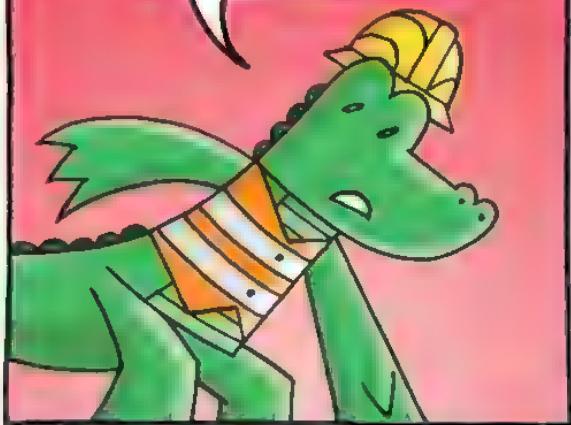
Gonna be tough paying these construction workers since they left the money at the MAW!



Nothing suspicious so far...



Oh! Well, THIS is certainly a red flag...



...a LOT of red flags!



Good thing, too, or I could've fallen into this gaping hole in the floor!

!GASP!



A ROCKET BASEMENT!

I'd say this explains a lot, but it really doesn't!



How did Hookline and Slinker even know about this place?



SSSSSSSS



Hookline and Slinker! I mean, uh, HOWDY, BOSS...?
I'm just on my union-mandated construction worker break. I certainly wasn't spying.

Now, um.
I've got
to—





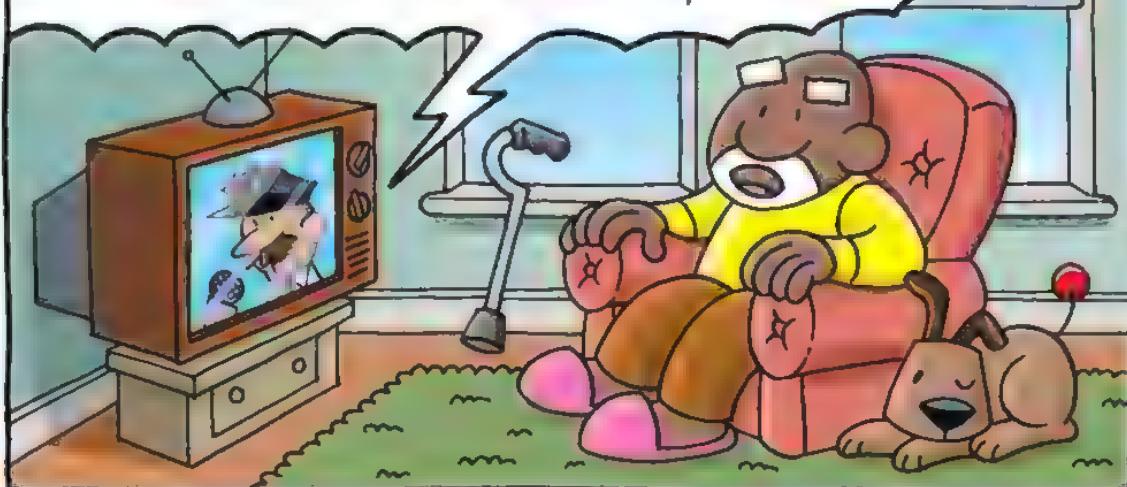
This is Cici Boringstories, reporting LIVE outside the **Mother of All Waffles!** According to the Action News Now police scanner, the chicken and waffle who escaped the Science Factory are **INSIDE** the restaurant!

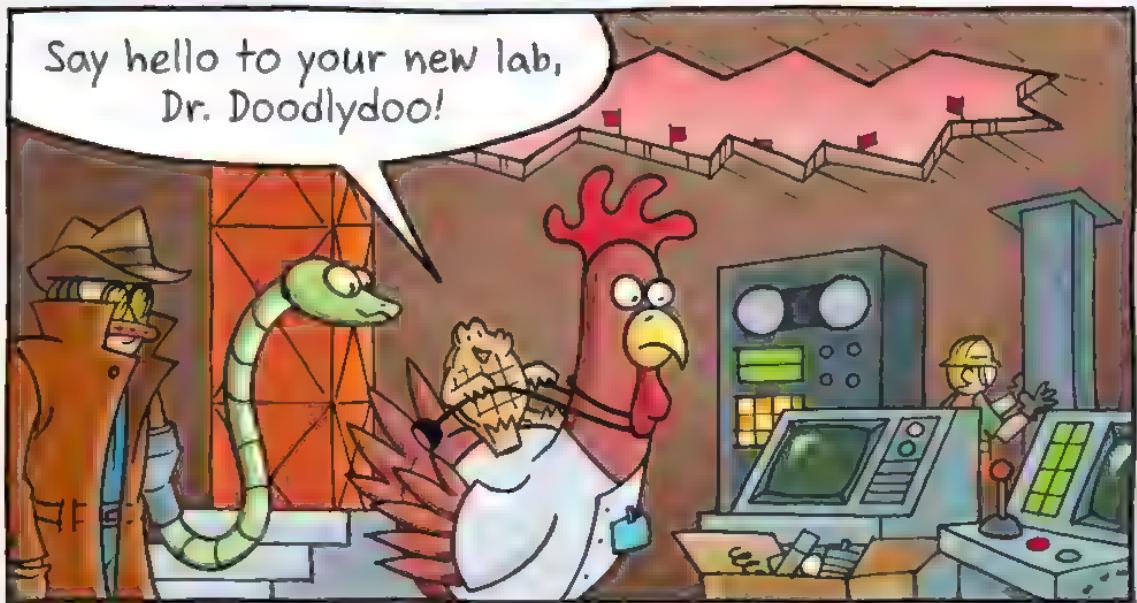
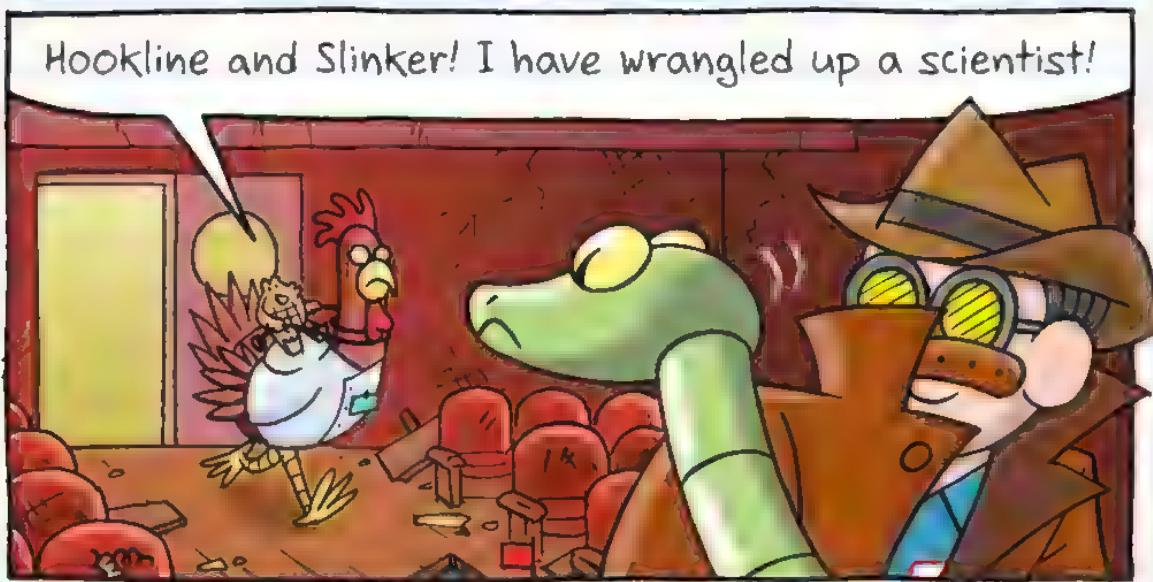
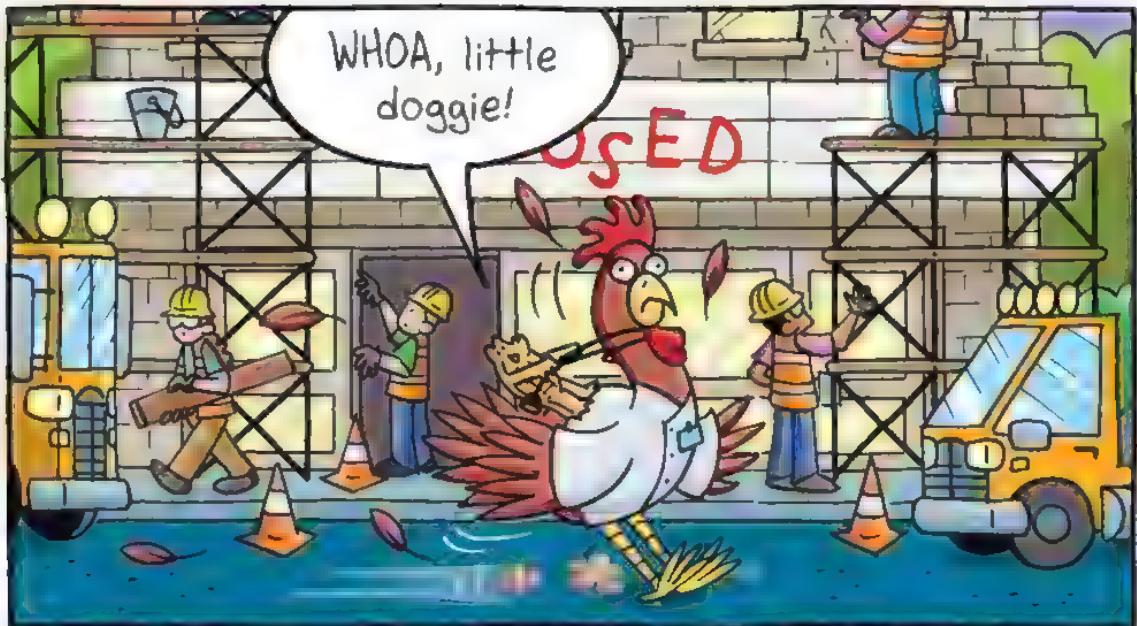


Officer! Do you think this incident has anything to do with the bank robbery? Or the #SnakeArmedMan who's trending on teh interwebs?



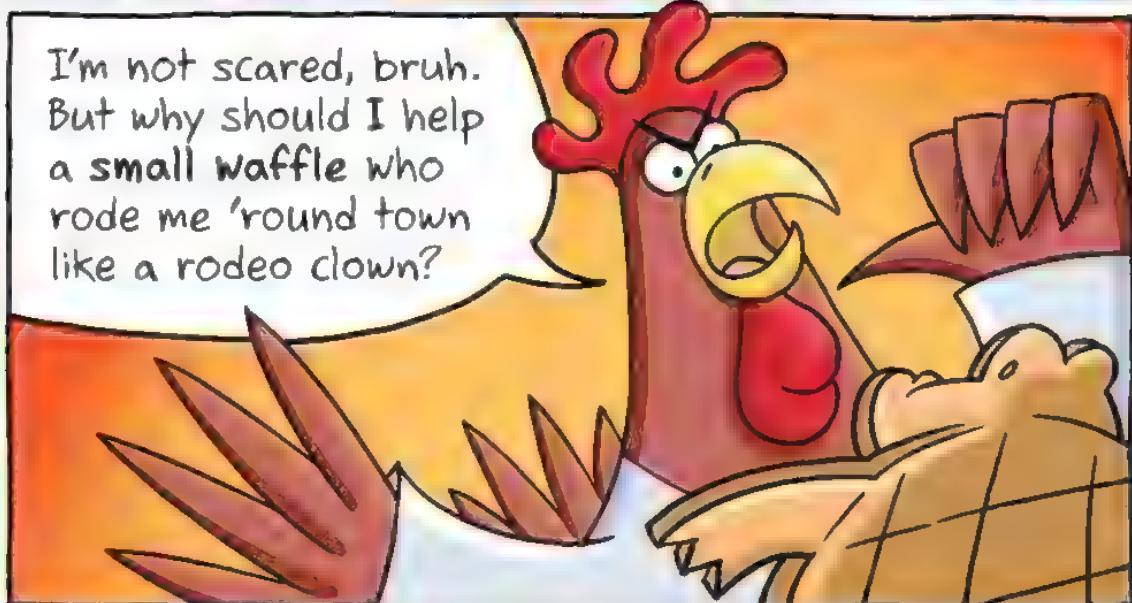
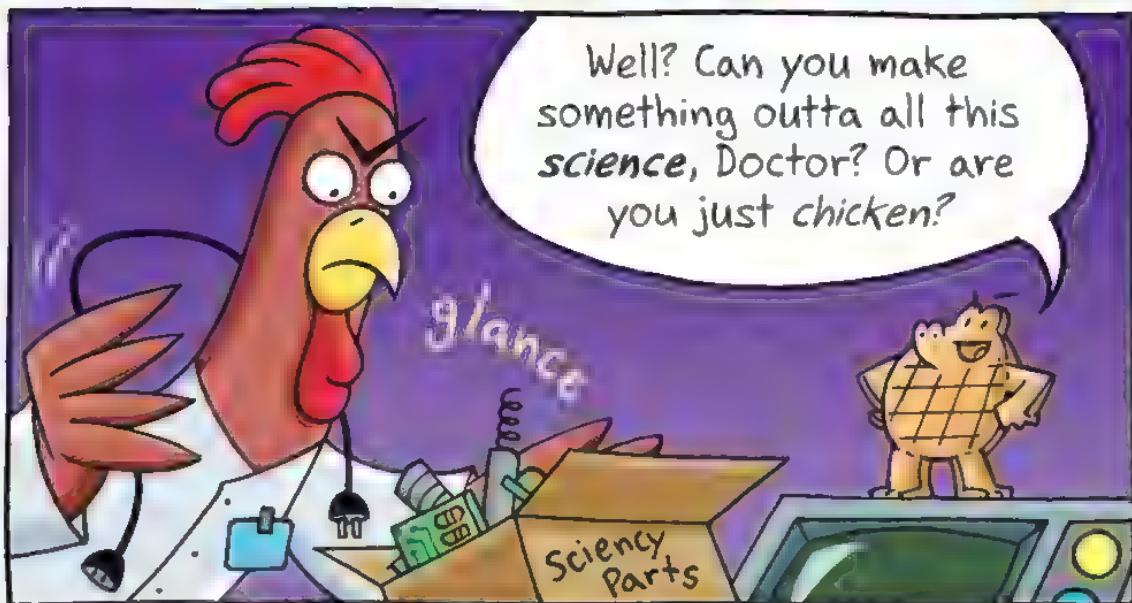
Well, I don't know about hashtags, but I do know about hash browns! They're delicious, and the MAW's got 'em for a dollar ninety-nine!

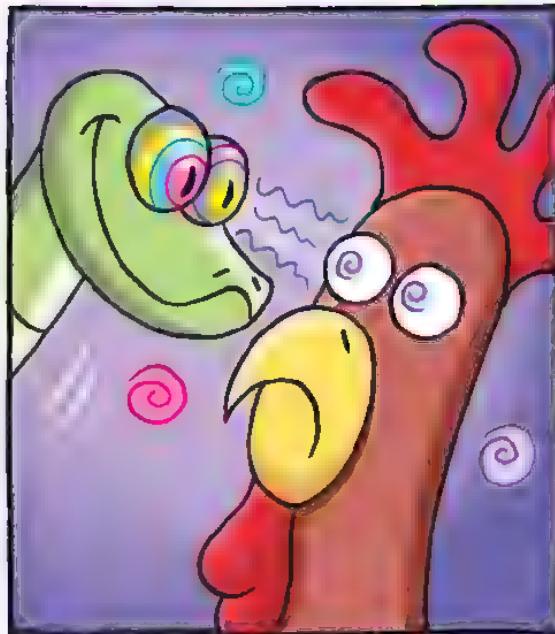
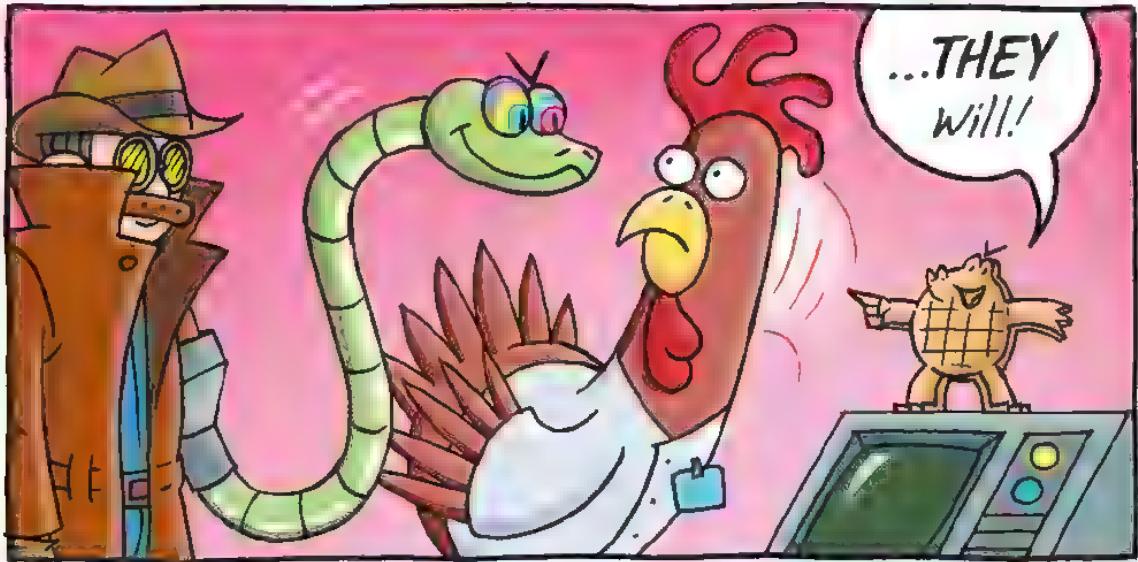
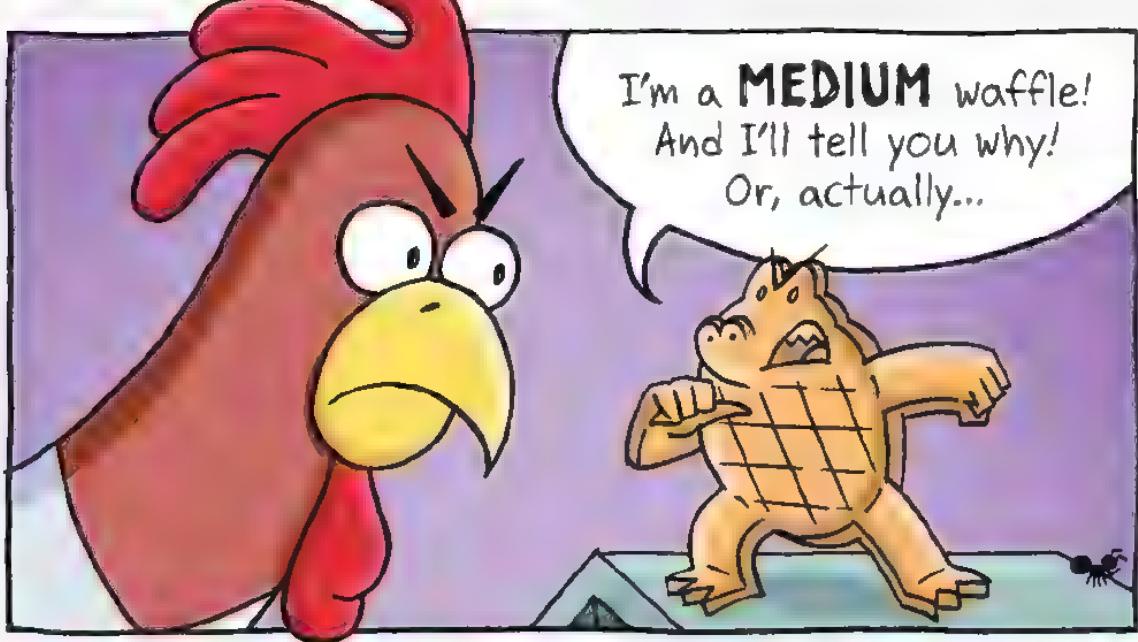


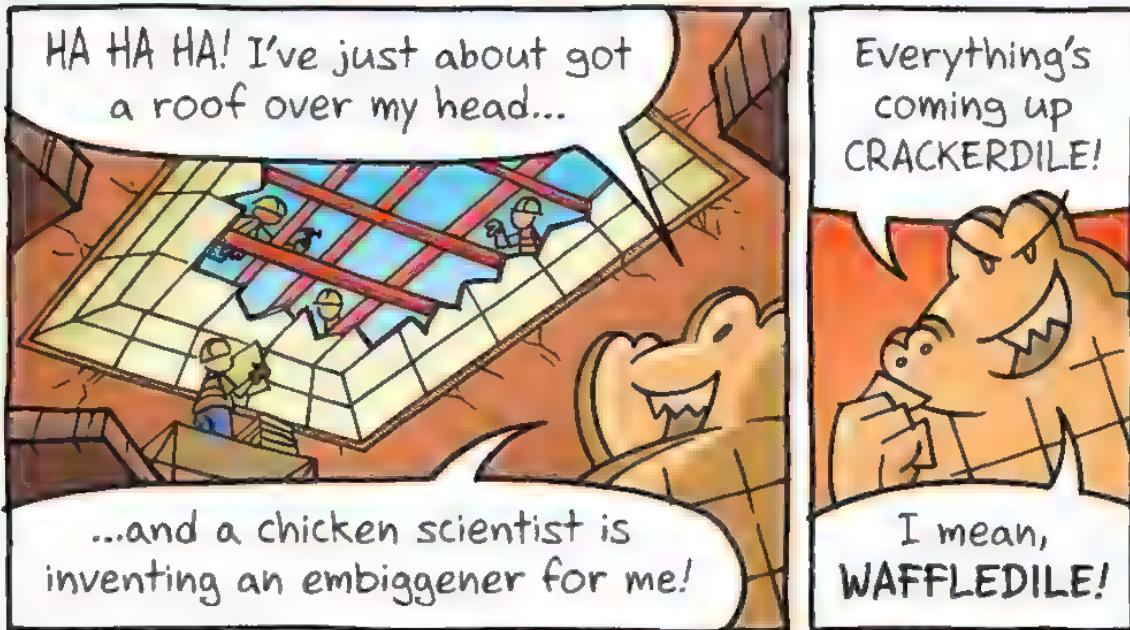
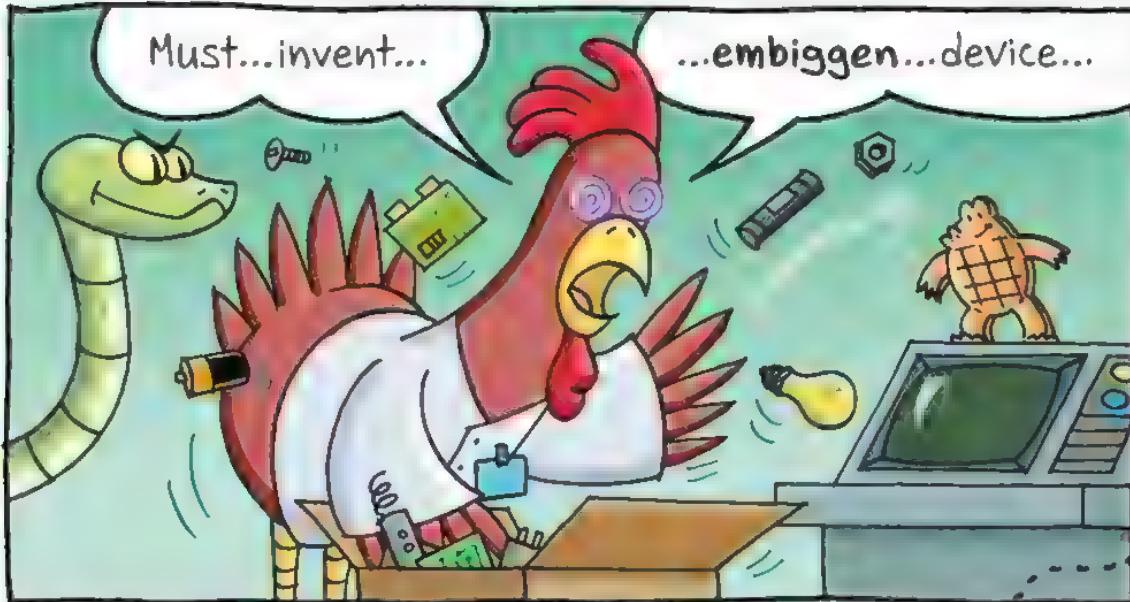




You're going to invent a device that will make me BIGGER than a medium waffle!







Chapter 15

Back to Brash...

Dagnabbit!

No additional clues
in the bank, AND I left
the MAW in such a hurry
I forgot to bring back
the stolen money!

But of greater concern,
still no sign of Mango!



V.E.S.T.,
find
Mango!

Nothing?
Why can't it
find him?

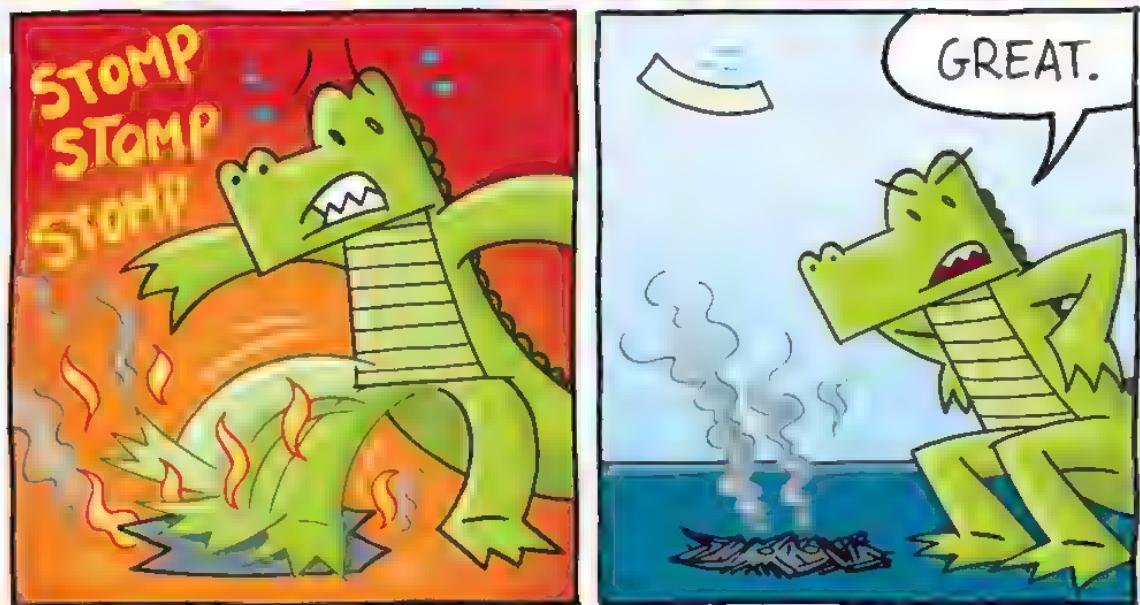
He's not in the bank,
not at the MAW... Maybe
he went back to S.U.I.T.
Headquarters?

Wait a minute—when we left
A.R.M.S., Mango technically
took **MY V.E.S.T.!**



V.E.S.T.! Find **BRASH!**



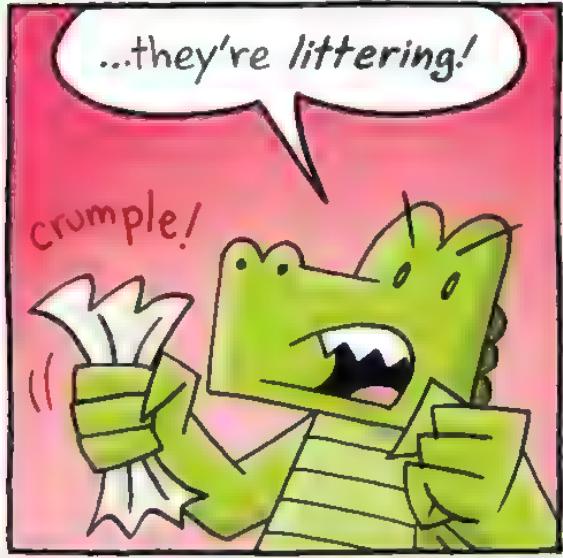




Since they're working with Crackerdile, then these flyers mean...



...they're littering!



But more importantly, it means Crackerdile is putting together a team of **EVIL VILLAINS!** And he's using the opera house as a not-so-secret lair!

I still don't know where Mango went... but my mission is and will always be STOPPING CRACKERDILE! I have to stick with the mission!



EXCUSE ME!

Where do you think you're going?



That bathroom is for
EMPLOYEES only.

What? I was just in here!
I'M an investment banker!



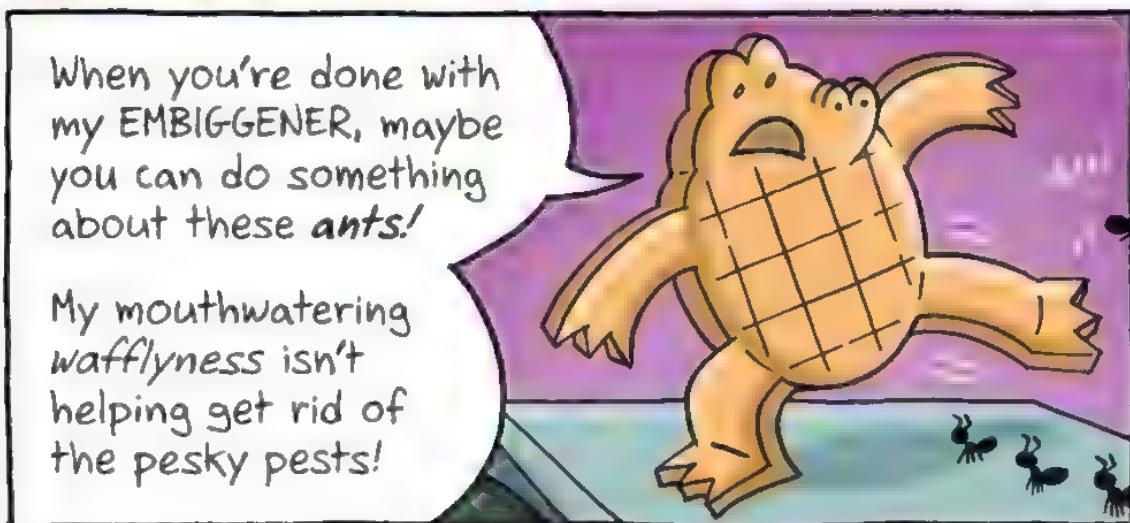
If you're an investment banker,
then why are you naked?

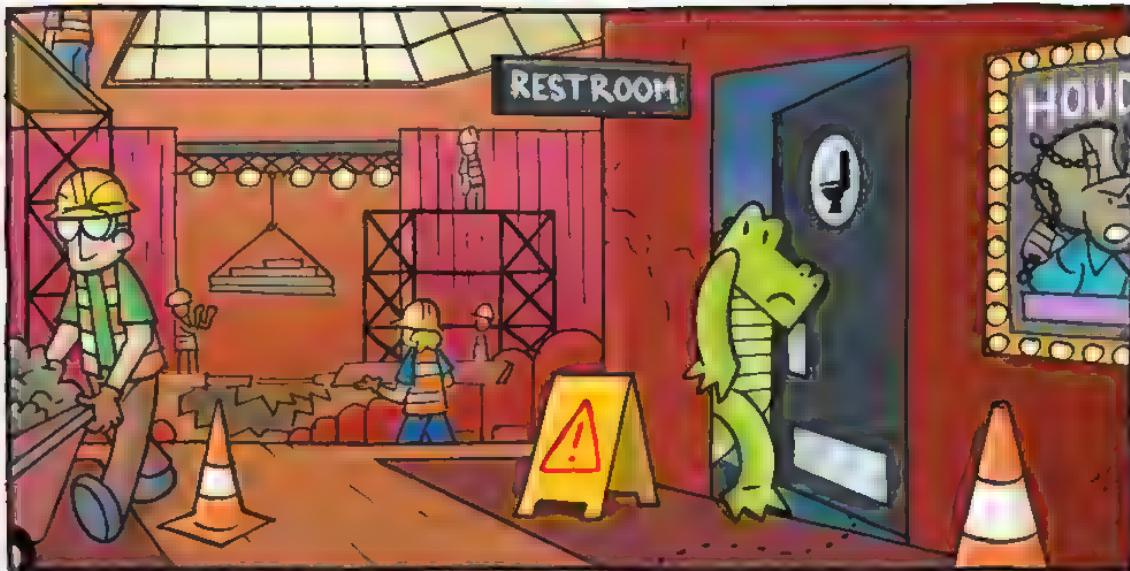
Today's not
CASUAL FRIDAY!



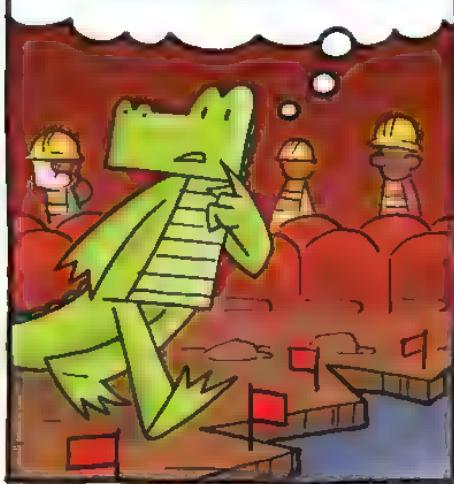


Chapter 16

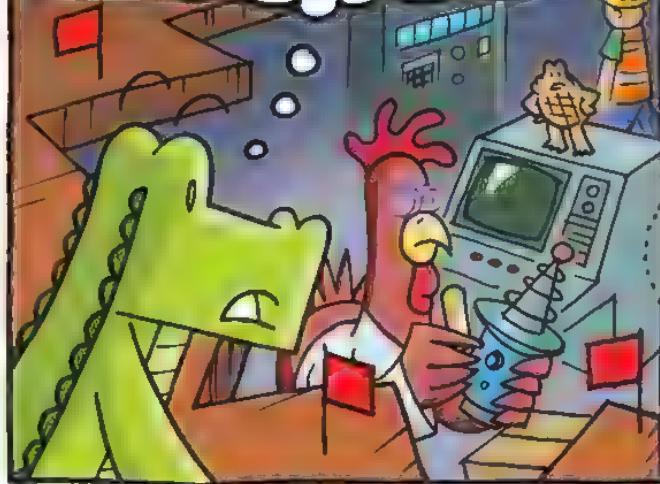




Lotta construction workers. Too busy to notice me...



♪GASP! Dr. Doodledoo is working with Crackerdile!





Huh? MANGO! He's...undercover as a construction worker! What a relief. Smart move, partner!



Wait a minute—**HIS** eyes are all squiggly, too!



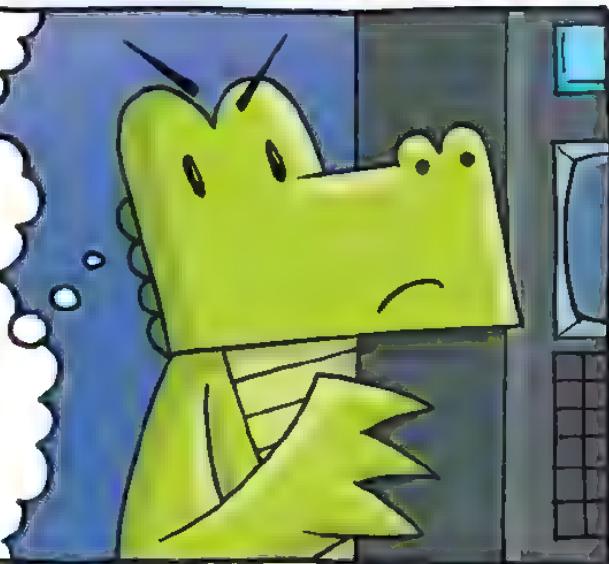
Mango and Dr. Doodledoo are **HYPNOTIZED!**



Their hypnosis must be because of...

SLINKER, the SNAKE!

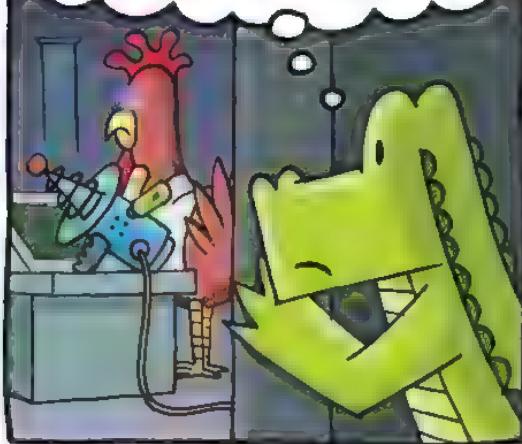
Science says snakes being able to hypnotize their prey is a myth... but Mango's eyes say science is *mythtaken*!



If I can reach him, maybe I can snap him out of it...



Or...I could go after that Embiggener...



Save my partner... or stop Crackerdile?

I—I don't know which to do!



Mango was right. This is a no-win scenario!



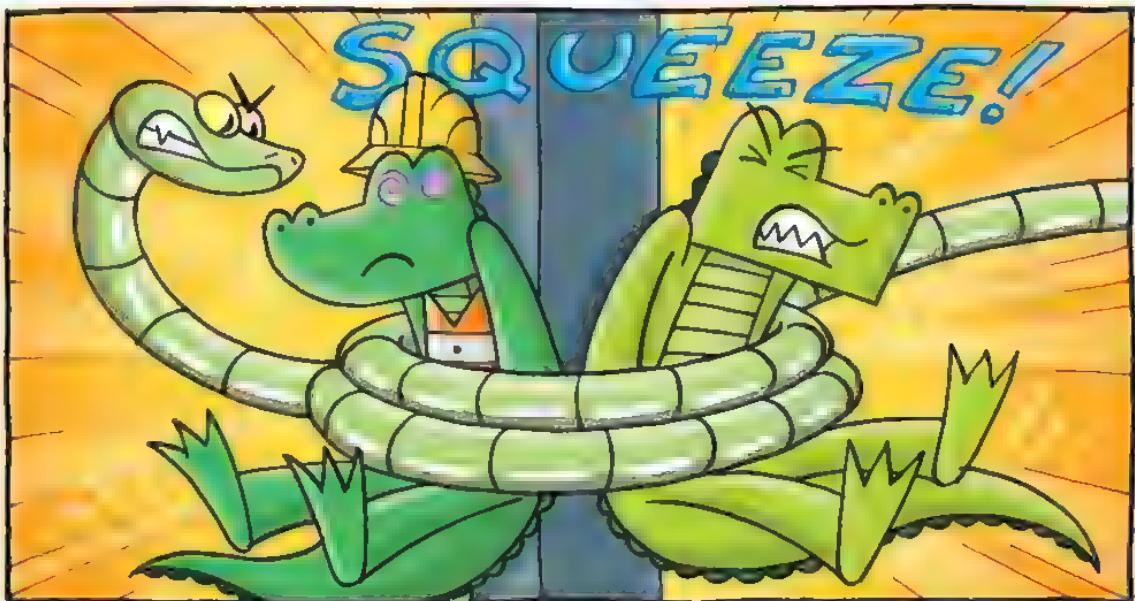
Well, I may not win... but I won't lose another partner!

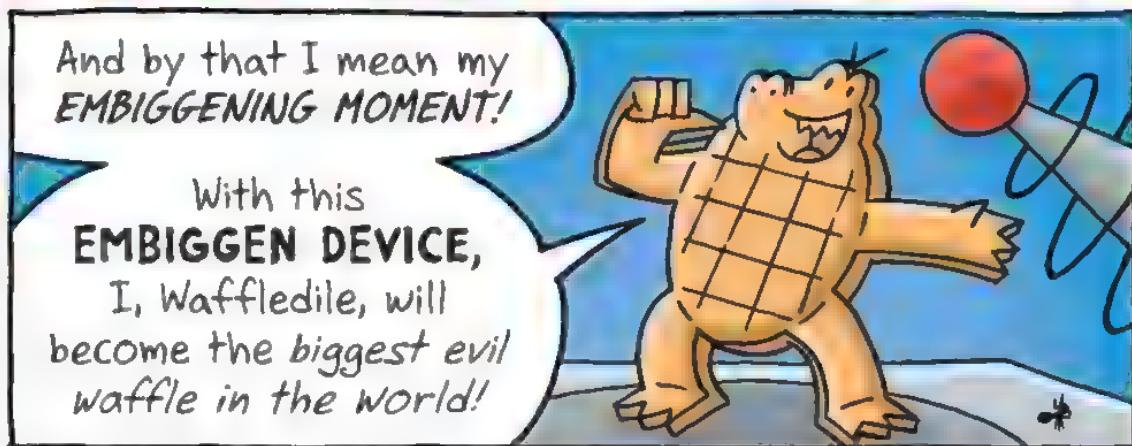
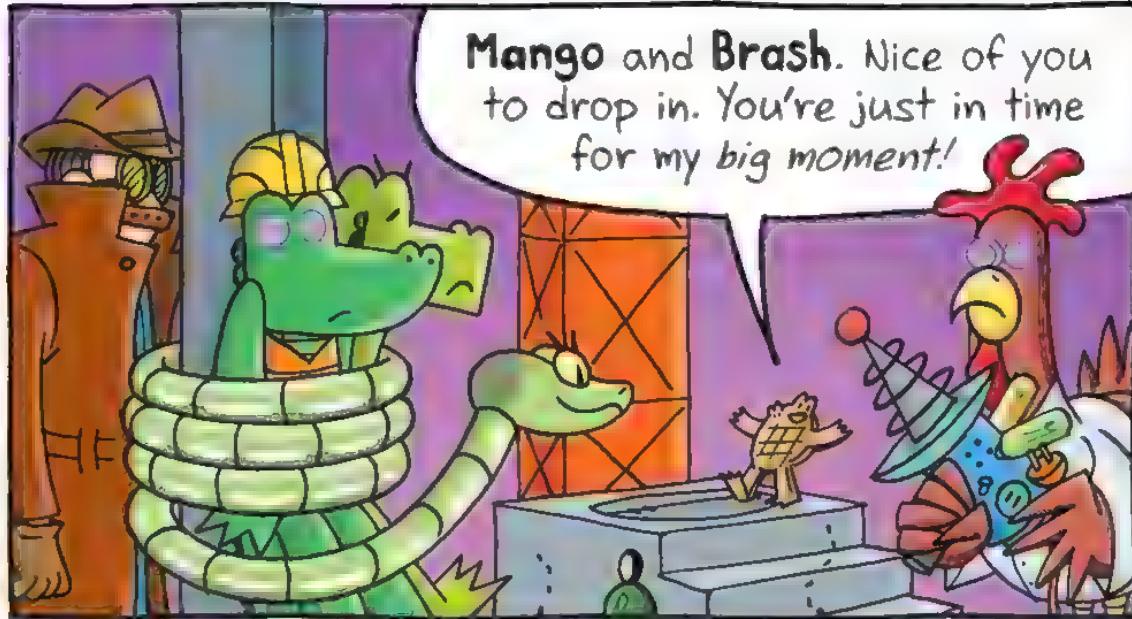


Mango! Psst! Wake up, Mango!

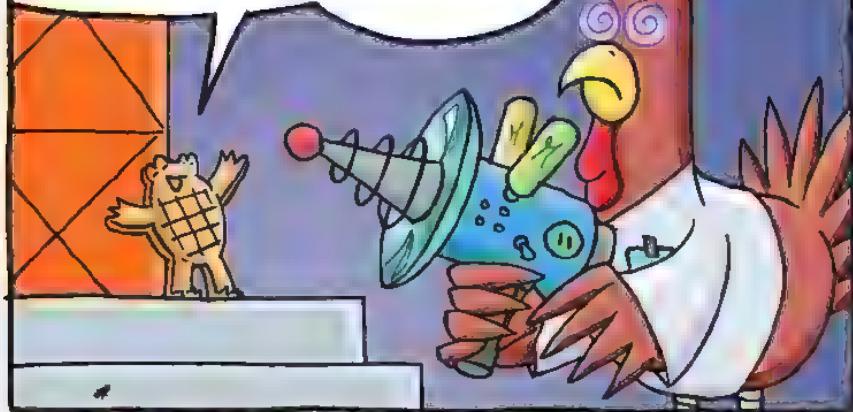
Man. Go?





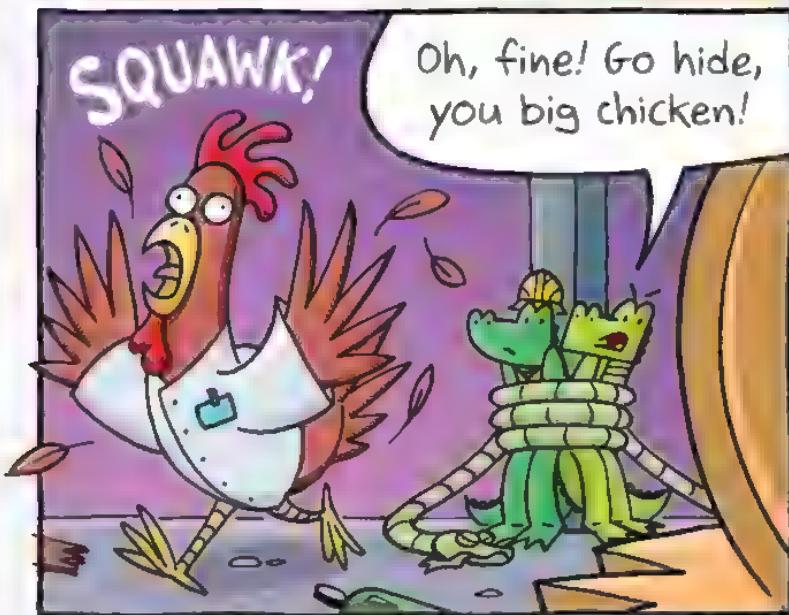
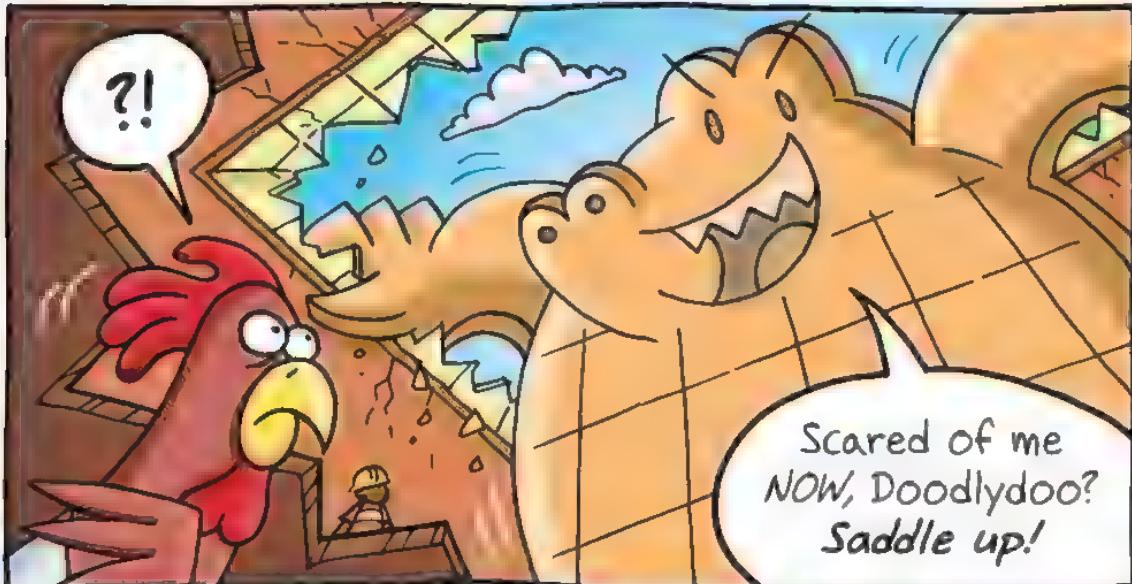


Doodlydoo! Let the
embiggening... **BEGIN!**









Well, Gators, looks like your **CLUCK** has run out! HA HA HA!
Get it?

That's what **YOU** think!

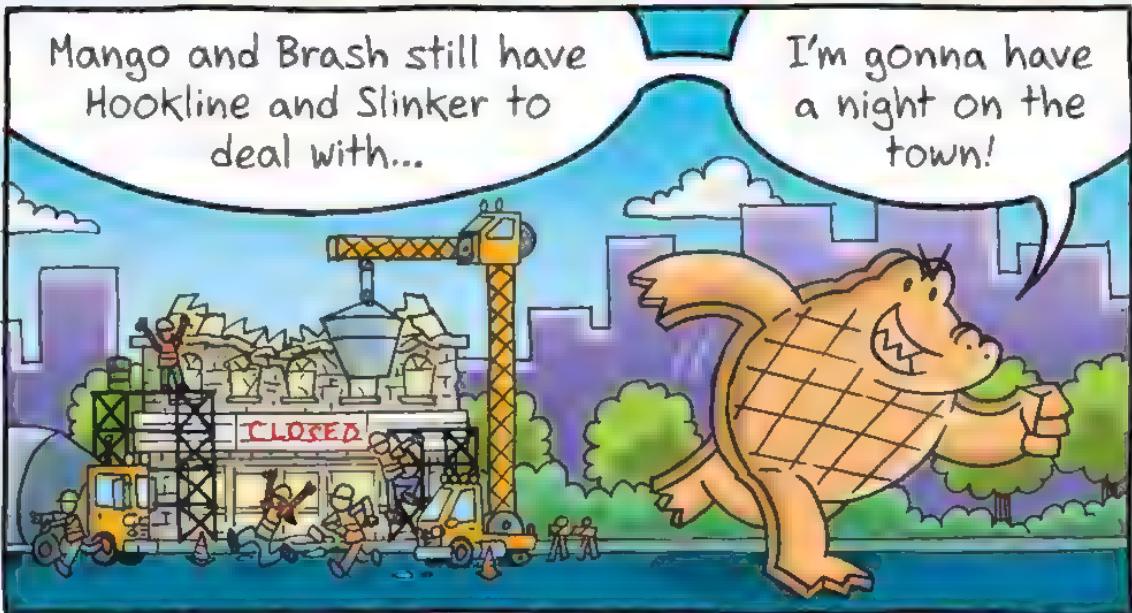
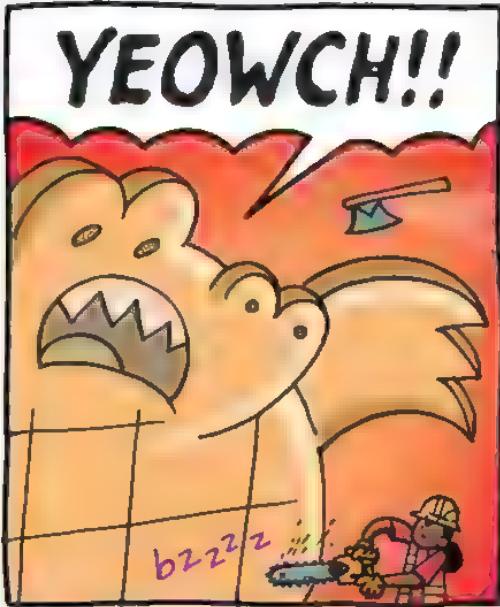
CONSTRUCTION WORKERS! You're no longer hypnotized! Stop that giant waffle!

We wasn't hypnotized.

We was doin' this job for the dough!

And by "dough," we mean **HIM**!





Chapter 17

Crackerdile is back,
and now he's a giant
WAFFLEDILE! Can you
believe it, Mango?

I thought I was
just seeing things!
Turns out I WAS
seeing things, but NOW
I'm believing things!

Uh... Brash? Slinker
is coming to...

So is Hookline—
I mean, Bill!

Wh-Who am I?

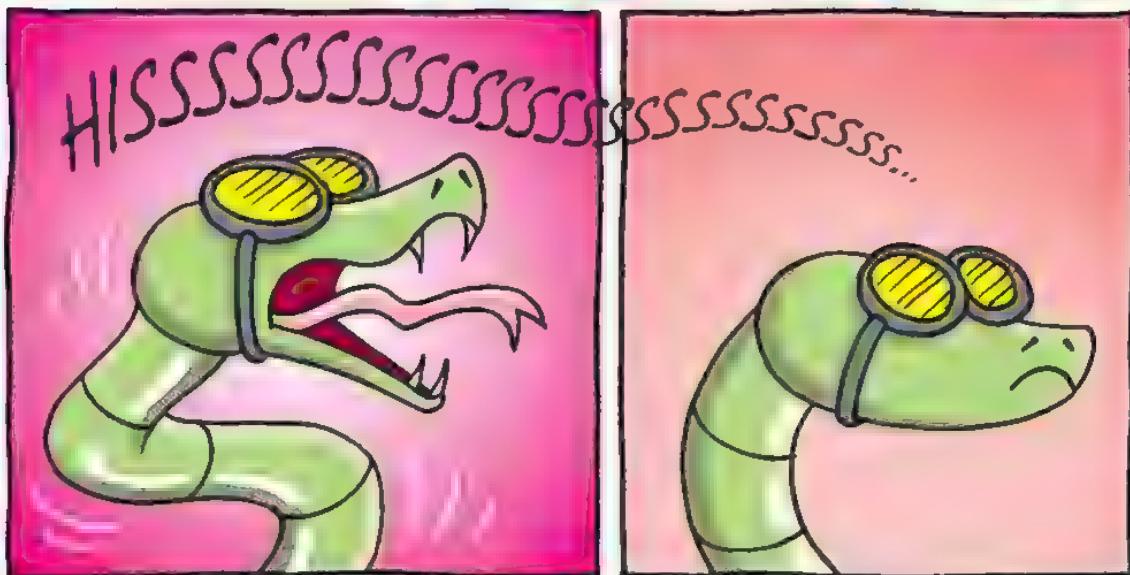
You're Bill Plungerman,
Ace Plumber!

Wh-What
have I done?!

What have WEEE DONE...

Don't look, Brash!
Keep your eyes shut!





I'm Mango and this is Brash, by the way. We're **InvestiGators**.

Thanks. I...I think I remember you now, from that waffle place.

I know you tried to stop me. I didn't **WANT** to rob that bank... or hypnotize anyone... or learn Photoshop just so I could design those flyers...but I couldn't control myself. It's like I was a *puppet*, and this snake was **pulling the strings**.

Speaking of whom, any idea where he'd go? What his plans are?

Well, we now know that **CRACKERDILE** was the puppet master all along!

All I know is, he wants to put together a team
that will rival something called S.U.I.T....

T.A.I.L.Blazers!

Tail-what?

Uh, is it safe, yo?

Doctor Doodledoo! Yes,
you can come out now.

In fact, you should take Bill back with you to the
Science Factory. Hopefully the Head Scientist has
figured out a cure for Hookline and Slinker by now.

'Sup.

Bruh.

Thanks, InvestiGators!

Anytime.

Now, come on, Mango! We've got a WAFFLE to catch up to!

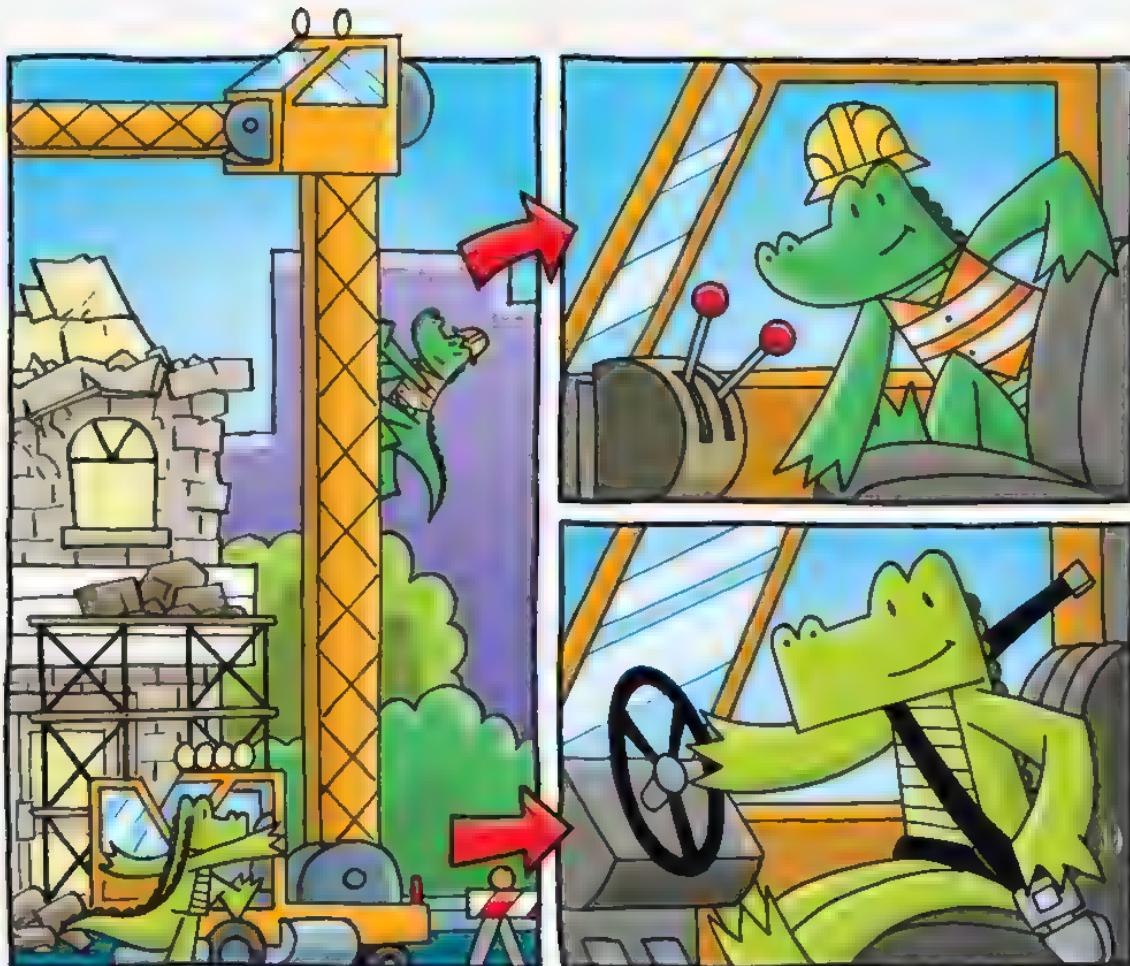
Ketchup? On waffles?

All the construction workers took off!

But what direction did Crackerdile take off in?

We'd be able to see him if it weren't for these tall buildings!

Brash!
You drive!



Chapter 18

This is Cici Boringstories with Action News Now, still reporting outside the MAW.



Officer! Is there an update in the situation involving the chicken and waffle who escaped the Science Factory and are reportedly holding hostages inside?

Oh, yeah!



Turns out it was these teenagers who were holding the chicken and waffles hostage!

We're innocent employees!



They demanded a ransom
of \$3.99! Or \$4.99 for
white meat only!

That wasn't ransom!
Those are the menu
prices! We SELL chicken
and waffles!

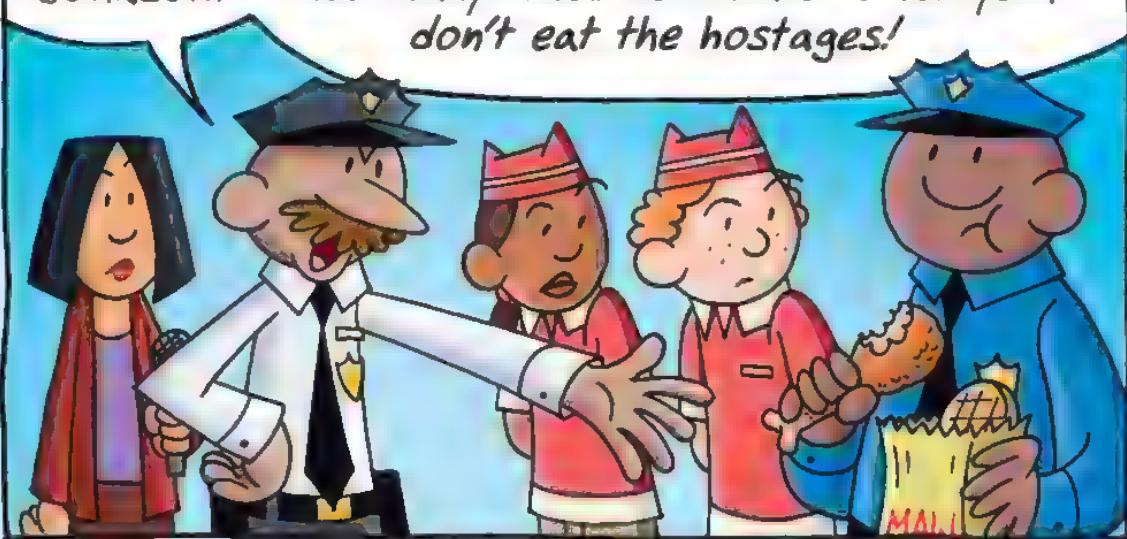


Ransom, menu price—either
way, it's *criminal*!

Criminally crispy! This
drumstick is **DELISH**!



JOHNSON! How many times do I have to tell you,
don't eat the hostages!





Johnnycakes are made with cornmeal! You're just a plain waffle!

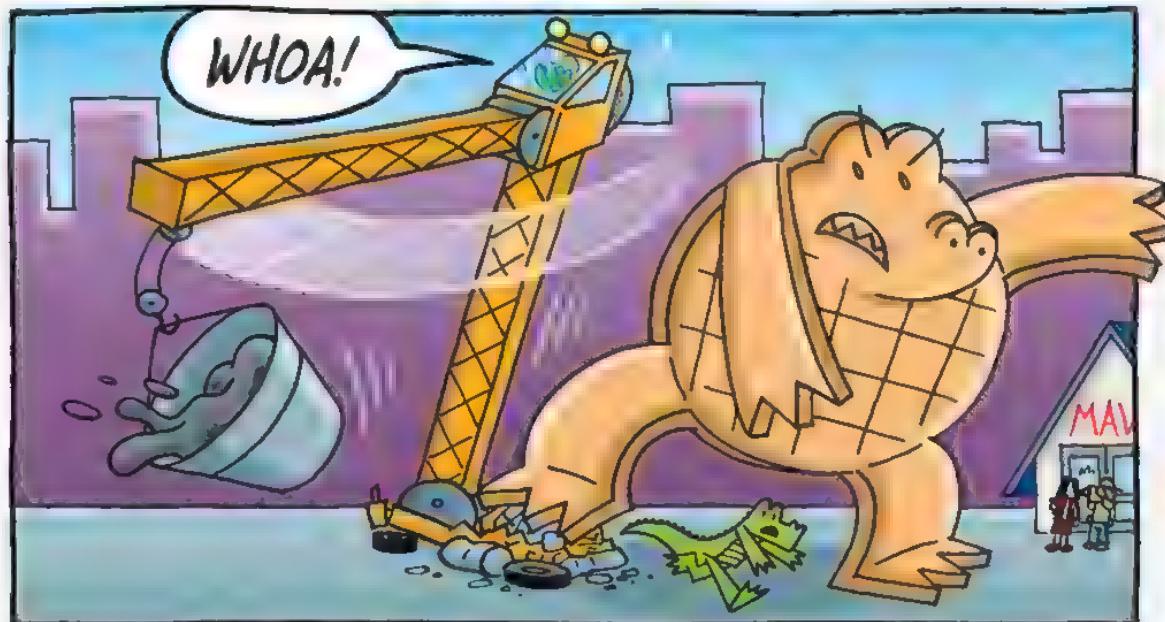
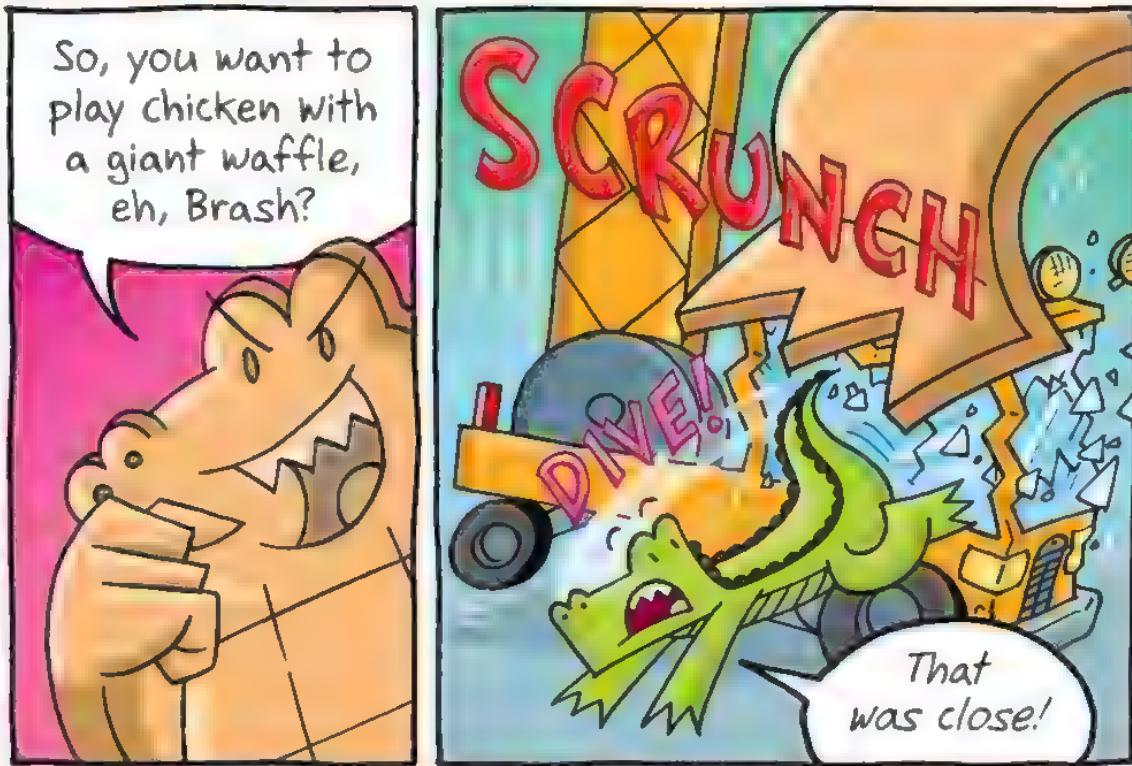


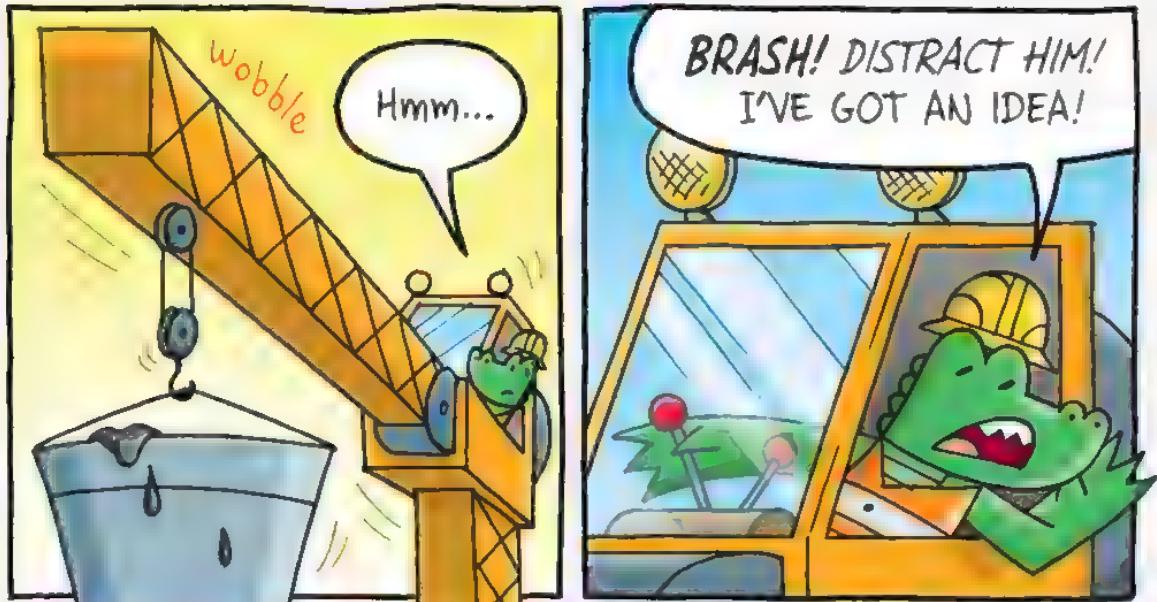
Plane? Don't you mean... HELICOPTER?

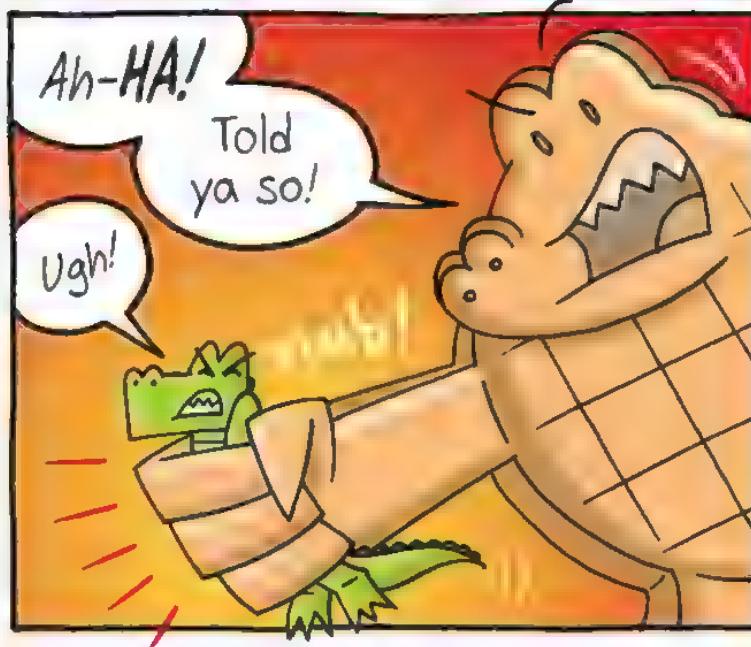
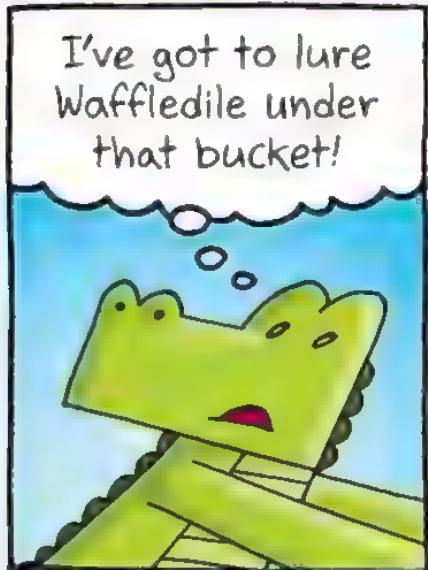
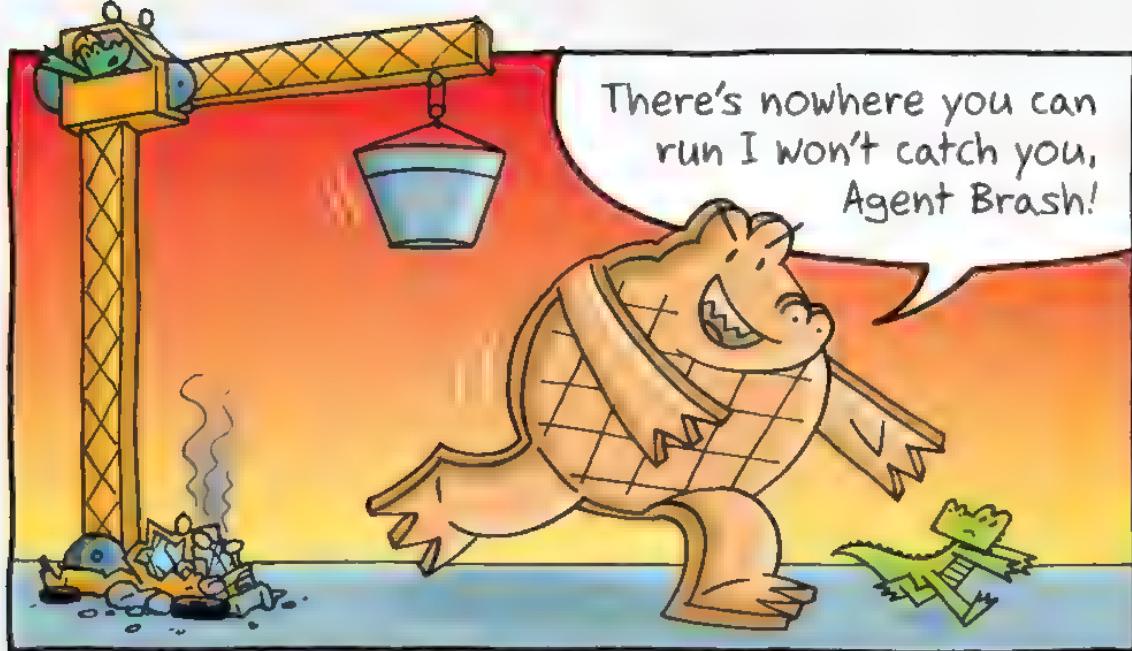


Come here, you! This is the perfect recruitment opportunity! Every villain will want to join my team if they see me on the news!



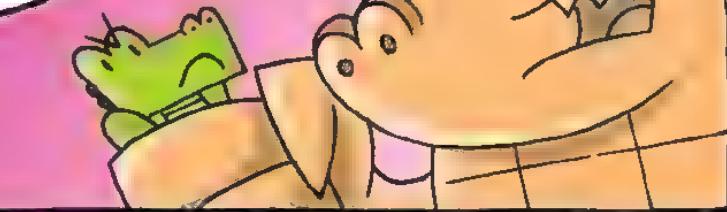






Heh heh heh! This is twice in one day you're about to be *squished* by a giant waffle! *THREE* times if we count when I stepped on the truck—

Bonk



What's this?

LET HIM GO, WAFFLEDILE!



Or *WHAT*, Agent Mango? You'll pour that concrete on me and turn me into a giant statue?

You do that and your partner here will suffer the same fate!

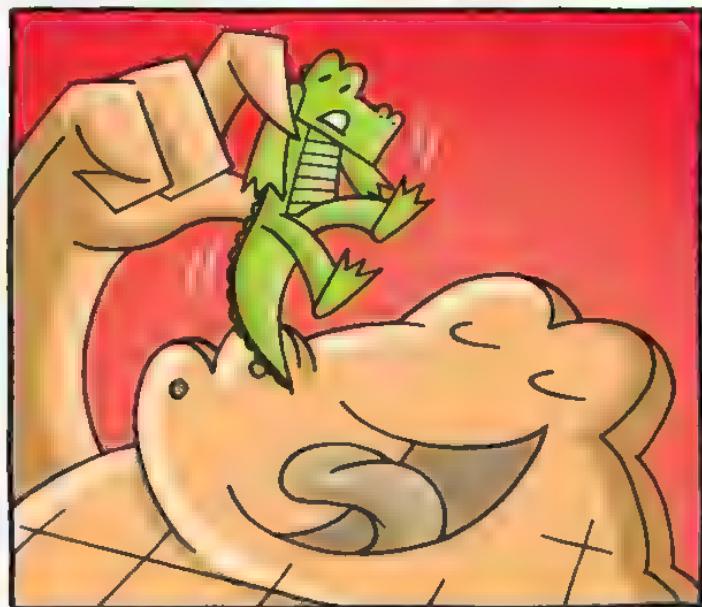


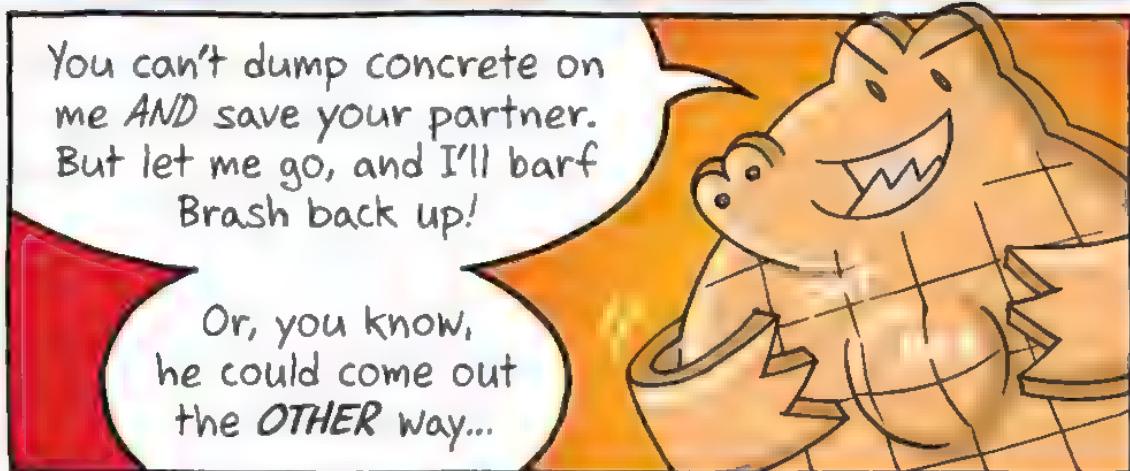
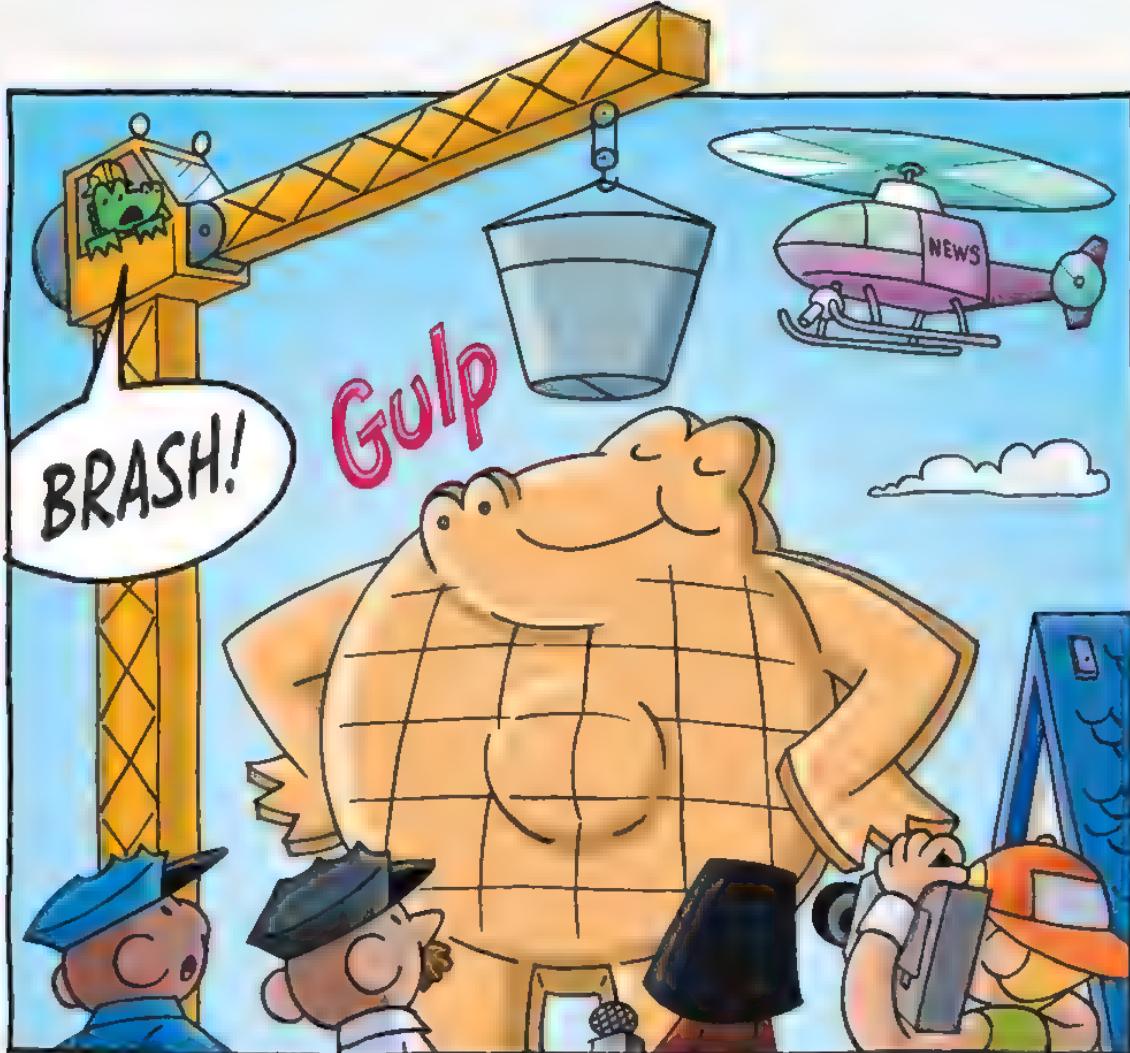
He's right!



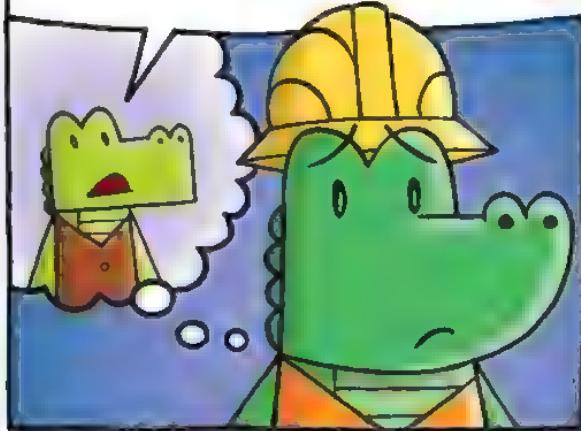
Forget about me, Mango!
It's more important to stop
Daryl—I mean, Crackerdile—
I mean, WAFFLEDILE!
For the **GREATER GOOD!**

Here, I'll make it
easy for you...





Sometimes there is no
GOOD choice. But you still
have to make A choice.



I'm sorry, Brash.

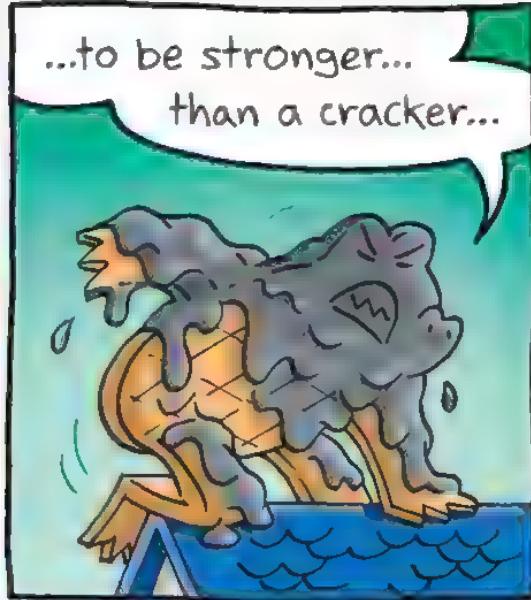


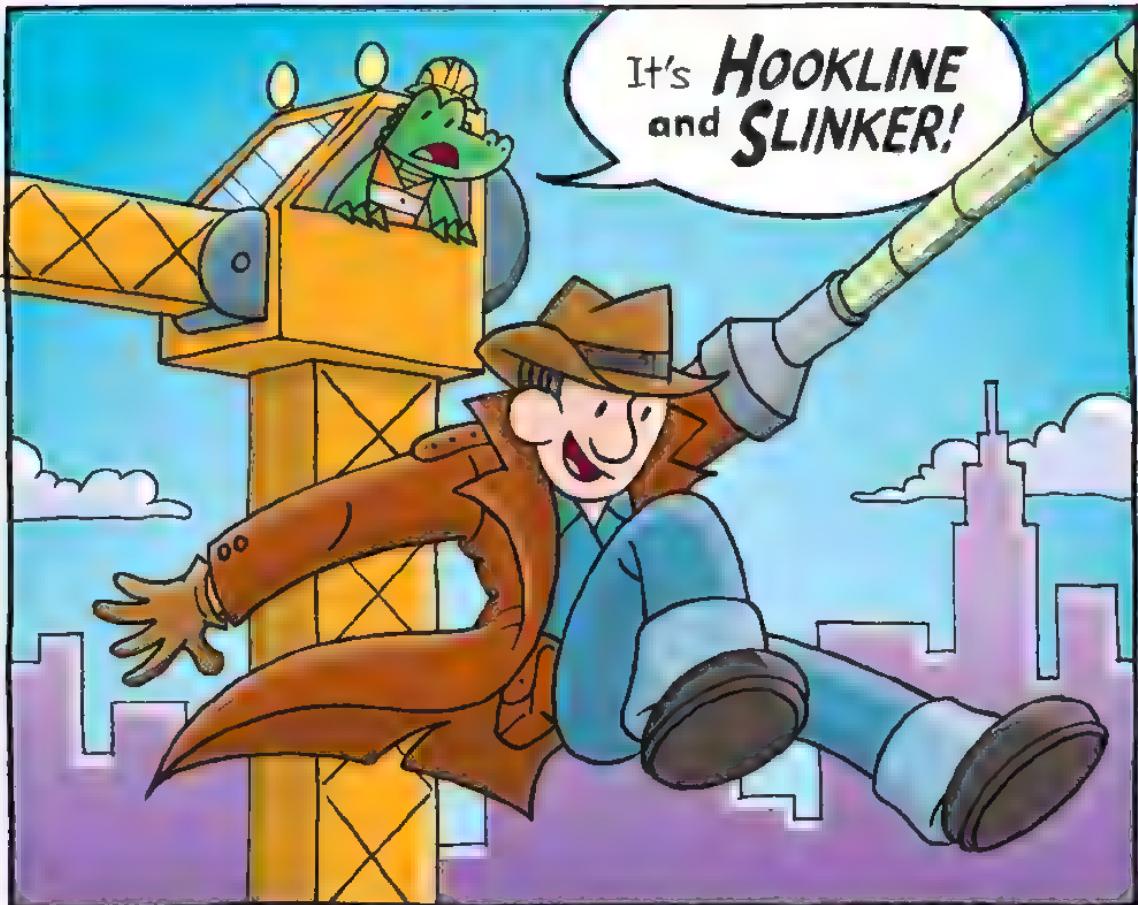
For the
**GREATER
GOOD!**

WHAT?!

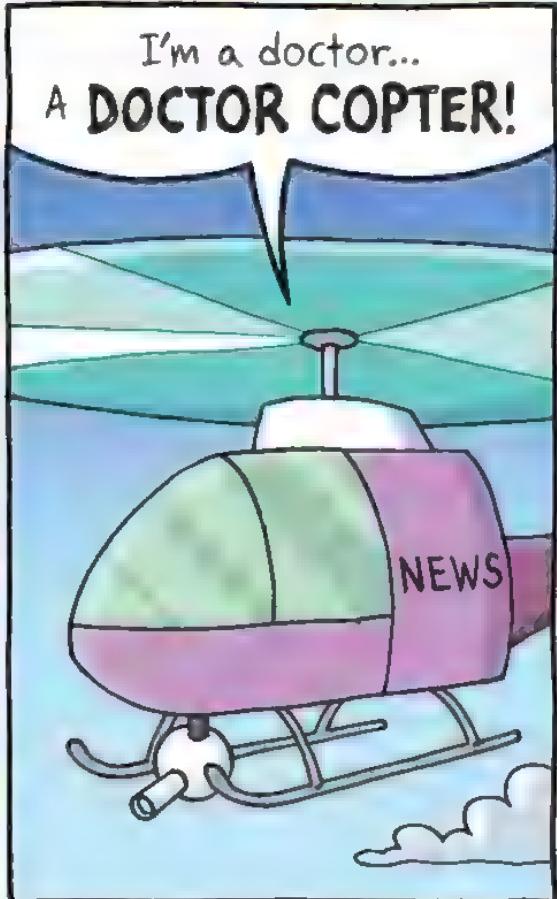
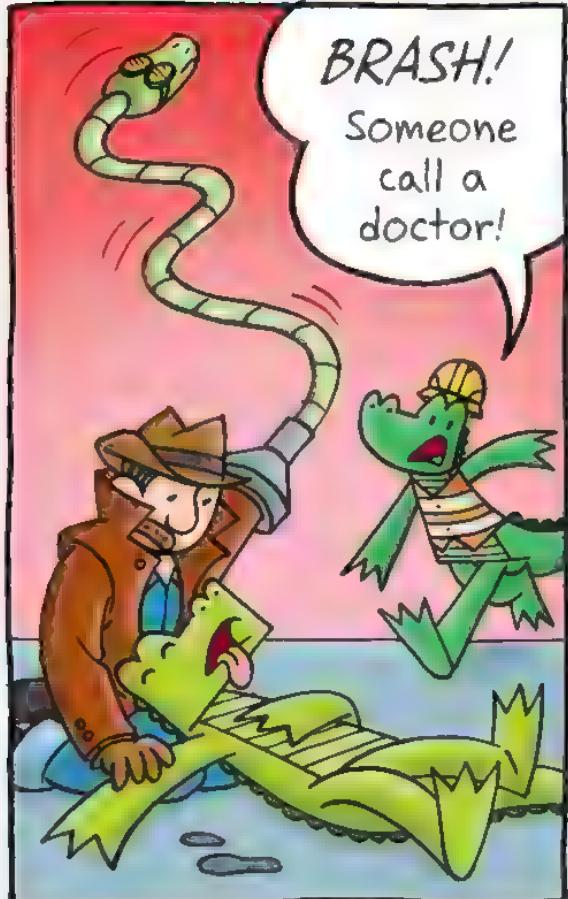
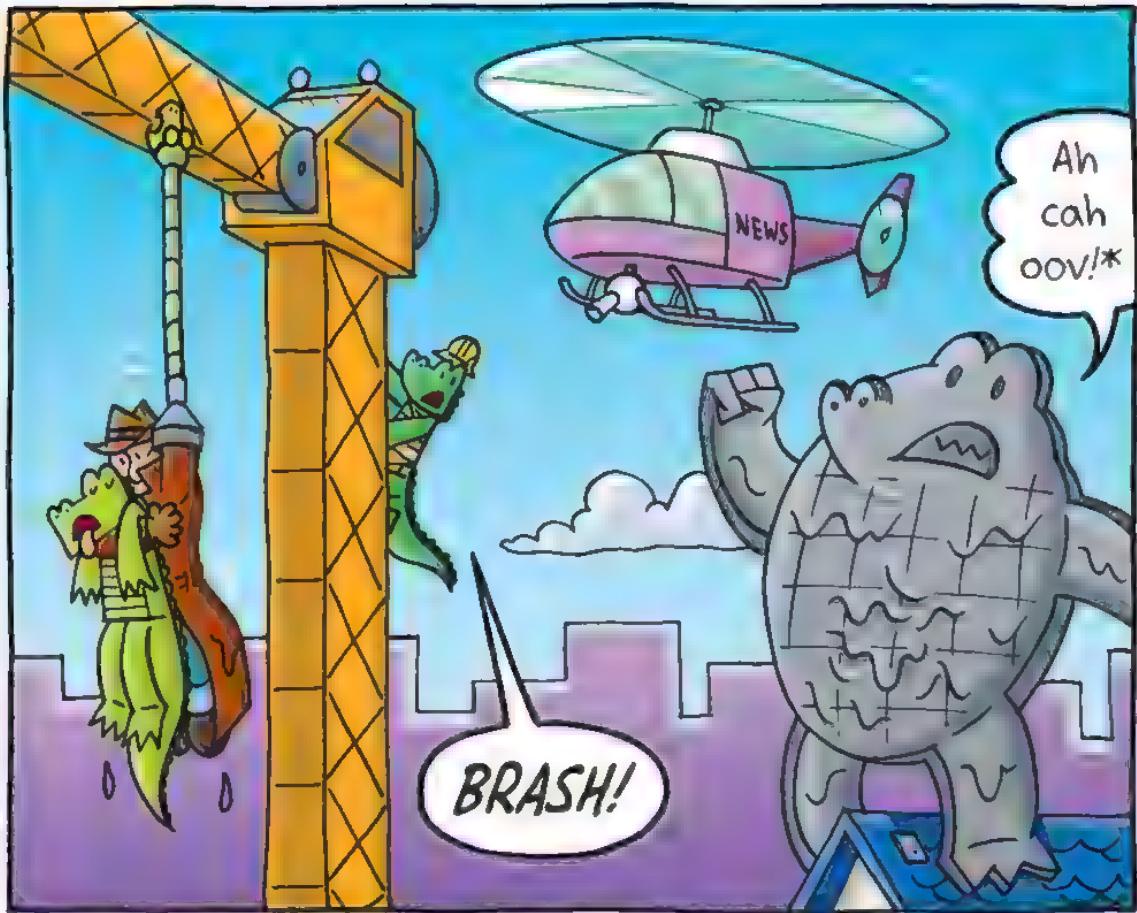
But your
partner!!











*Translation: "I can't move!"





HEY! The emergency
is over here!

Oh, yeah? Well there's a food
emergency in my belly! And
@CameraBoy64 posted that
there were free wuggets!

MY FRIEND NEEDS TO GET
TO THE HOSPITAL, STAT!

AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW
WHAT "STAT" MEANS!

Hang in there, Brash!

Let's
go!

Just so ya know, *somebody* owes me some wuggets.



Why are we still under arrest? Haven't you realized
the giant waffle on the roof is the one
you were after?

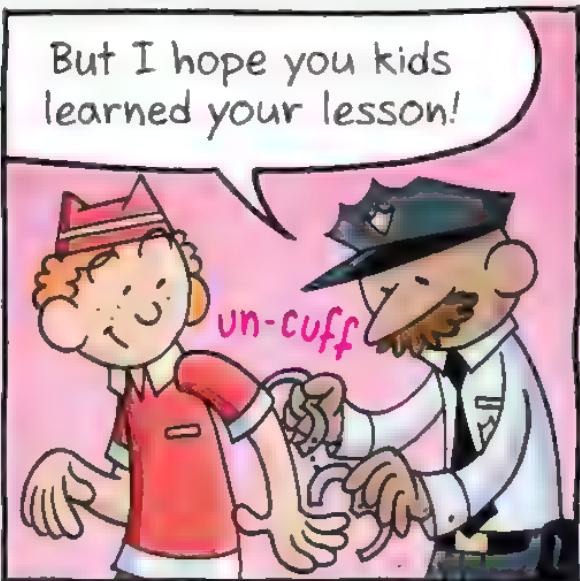


He's the one that stole that money and kidnapped
the chicken! Even us teenagers figured that out!

Well, I guess that
makes sense...



But I hope you kids
learned your lesson!



You heard it here first, viewers! The snake-armed man turned out to be a good guy, the stolen bank money has been recovered, the waffle has turned to stone, and the chicken has, presumably, been eaten!

Hold on... Correction: Only the chicken that was on the **MENU** has been eaten, **NOT** the one from the Science Factory. For Action News Now, this is Cici Boringstories, signing off.



AAAAAAND...we're out.



You didn't say anything about our news copter transforming into a brain surgeon.

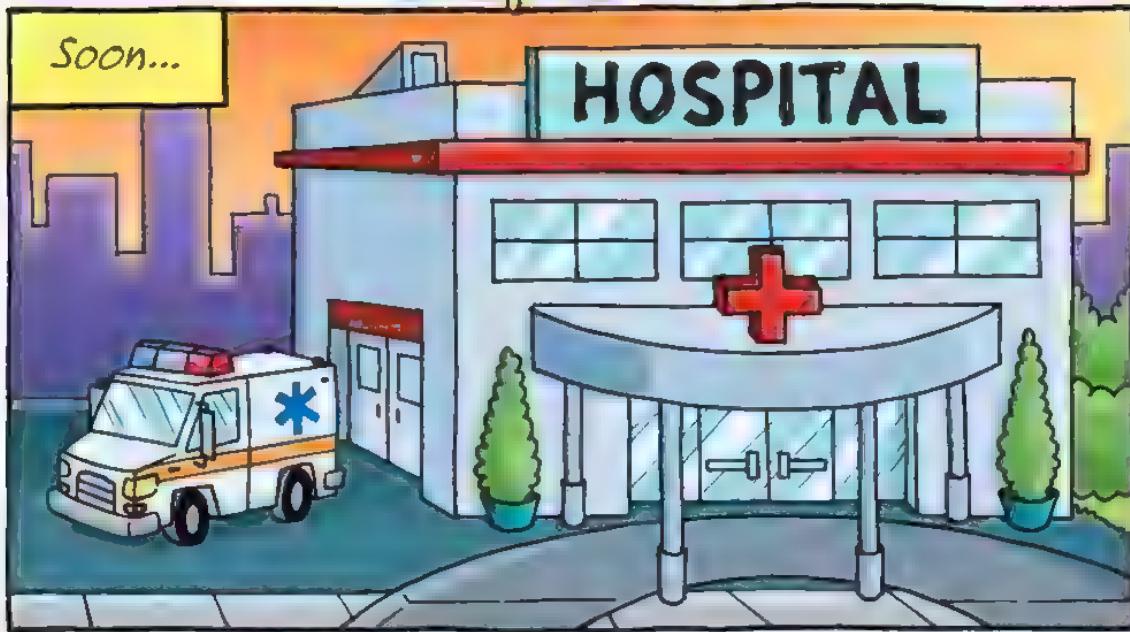


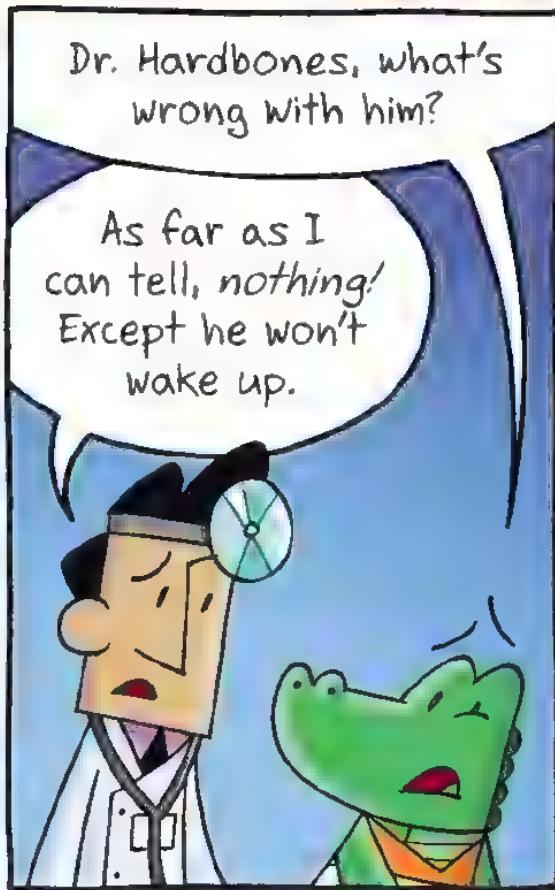
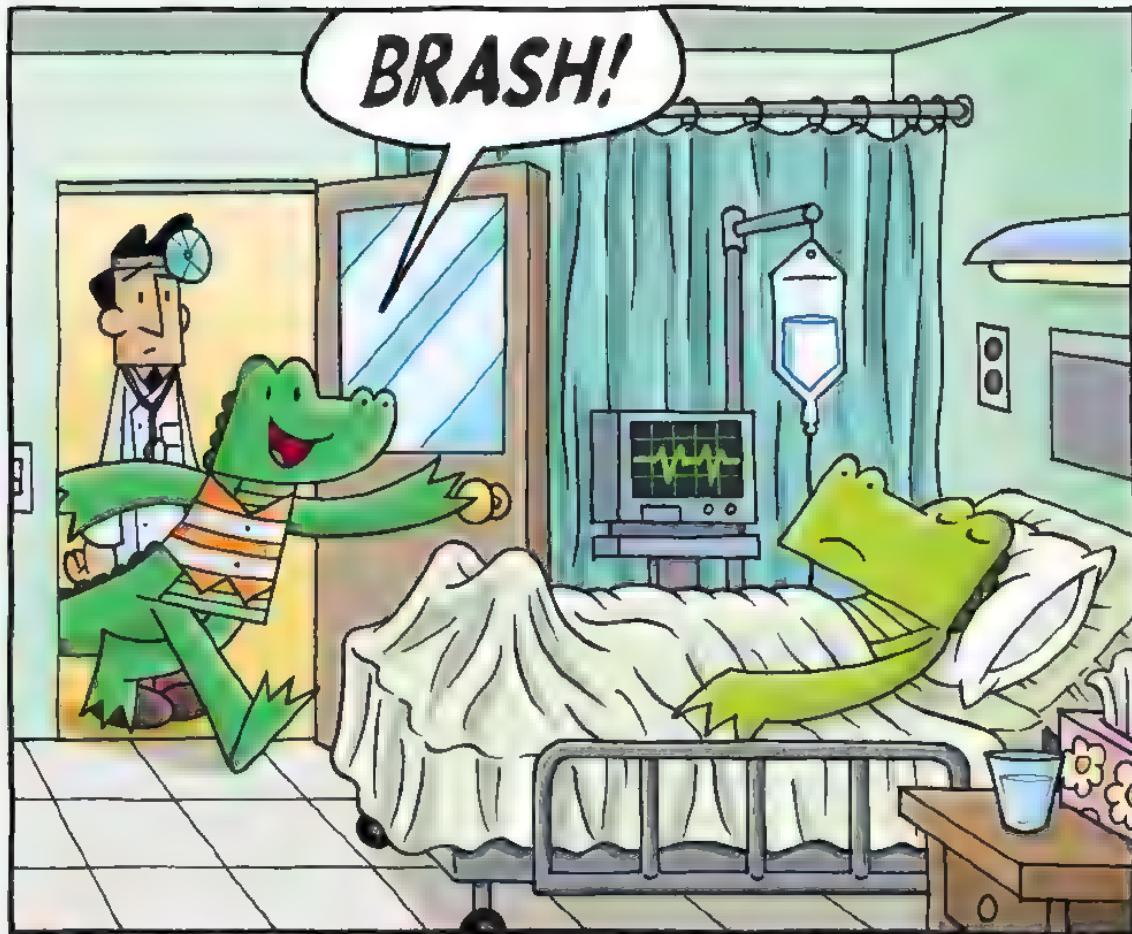
Oh, please. No one's going to believe THAT.

It sounds like something straight out of a comic book!

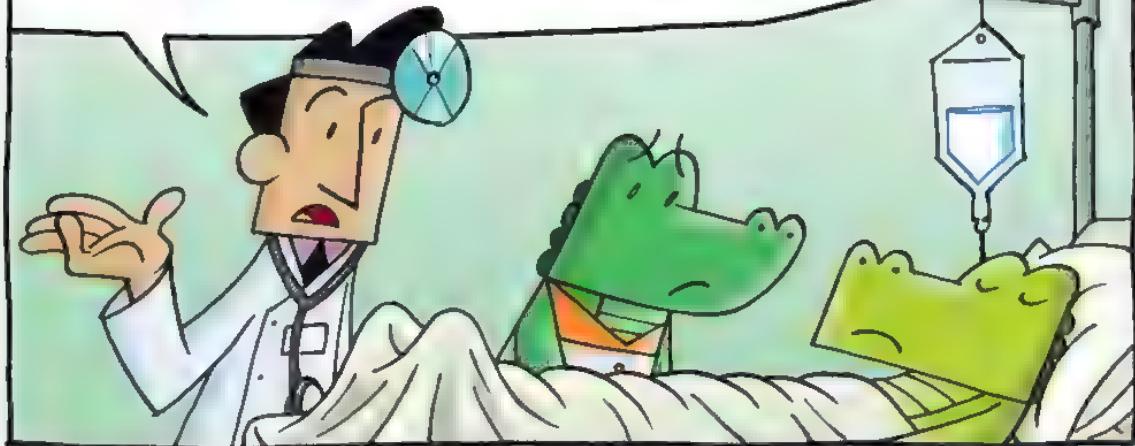


Chapter 19





Brash is in perfect health, but there must be something in his mind blocking him from regaining consciousness.



But fear not! I, Dr. Jake Hardbones, Brain Surgeon, will do everything in my power to cure Brash's cranial condition.

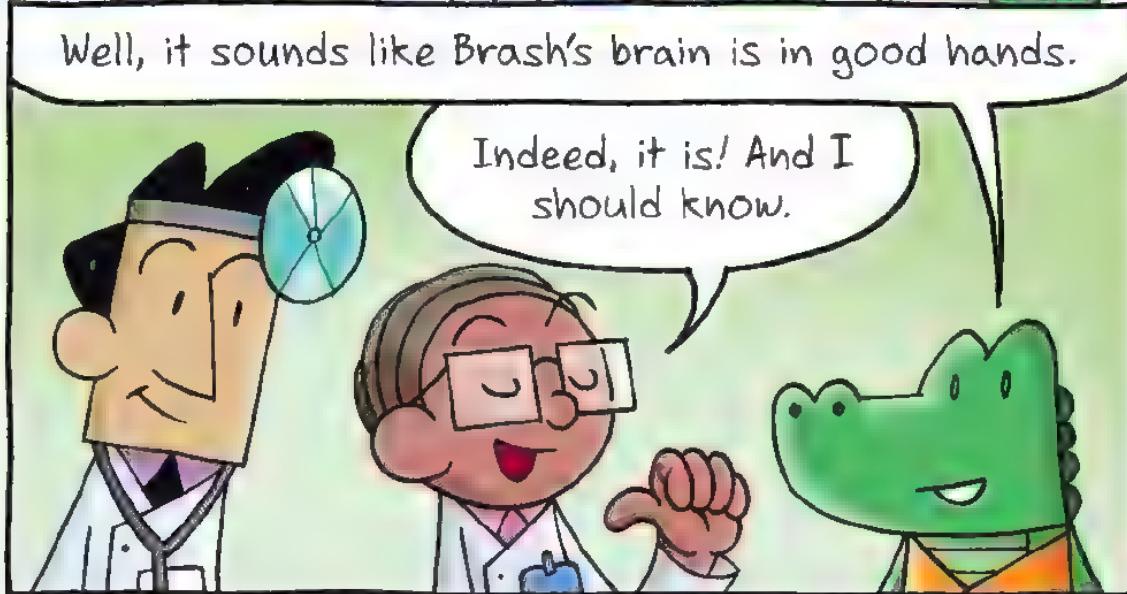
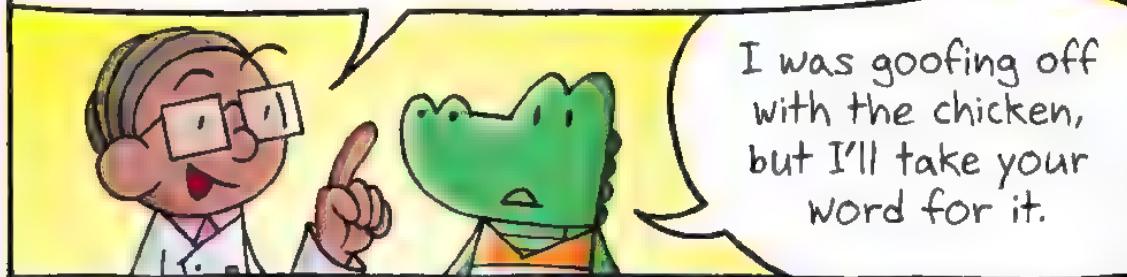
In fact, I've even called in for backup!



The Head Scientist from the Science Factory!



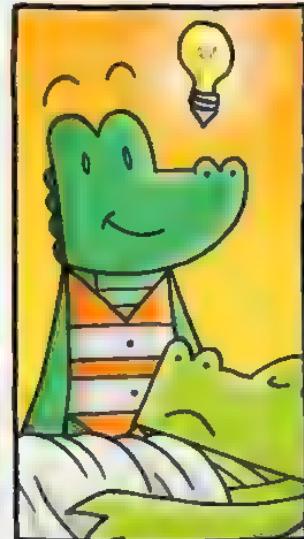
If you'll recall, way back on page 57, I had the idea to invent a device that can harness the consciousnesses of the plumber and the snake, to aid in the separation of their bodies.



My brain has **LITERALLY** been in this man's hands. And I feel smarter than ever!

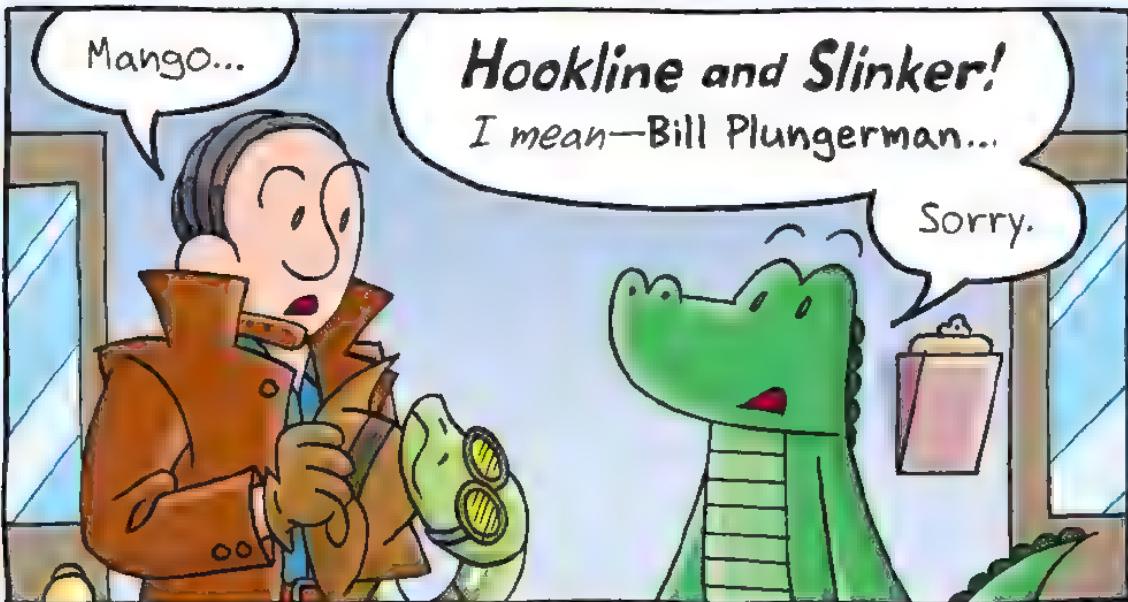
Aw, shucks!

Thank you, doctors.



Take care,
Brash.

I'll see you
soon.



Well, thanks to the **InvestiGators**, I'm no longer under that waffle's *OR* Slinker's control. And now I know how to snap out of the hypnosis, so I'll be able to keep from losing my head again.



There you are! So THIS is where everyone went!

Dr. Doodledoo! Did you get lost?



This dude took off into the air when we were on our way to the Science Factory! It took me this long to catch up. I can't fly, you know. I'm a chicken!

Sorry about that. For giving you the slip, I mean. Not sorry that you're a chicken.



We're cool,
brush.

I just couldn't let Brash become a statue after saving me. Especially since all this trouble was my fault.

I want to make things right.



In fact, I might keep this snake-arm. The Head Scientist offered to separate us, but I think there's a lot of **GOOD** that **Hookline and Slinker** can do for the world.

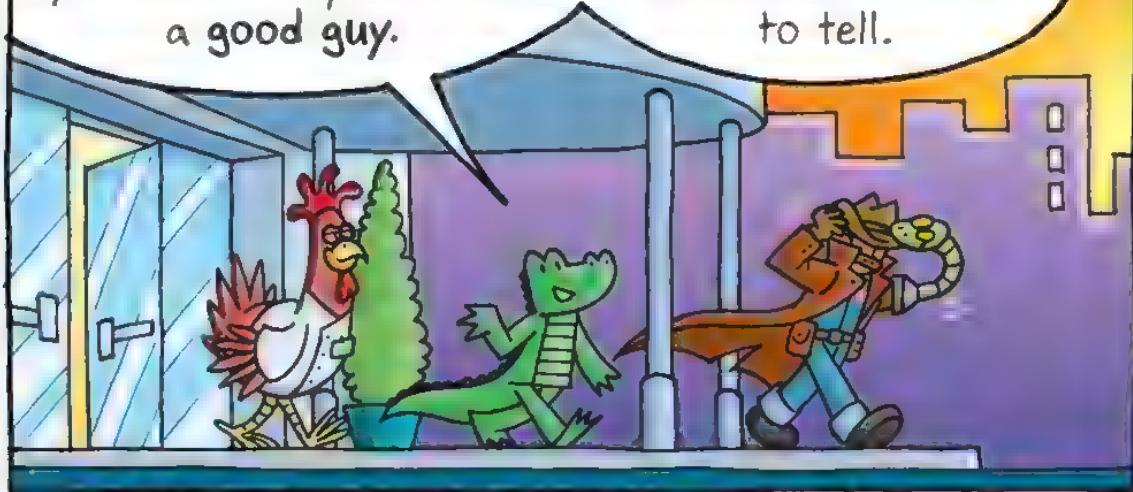


Plus, this arm will **really** come in handy when I'm unclogging drains! I am a **plumber**, after all.



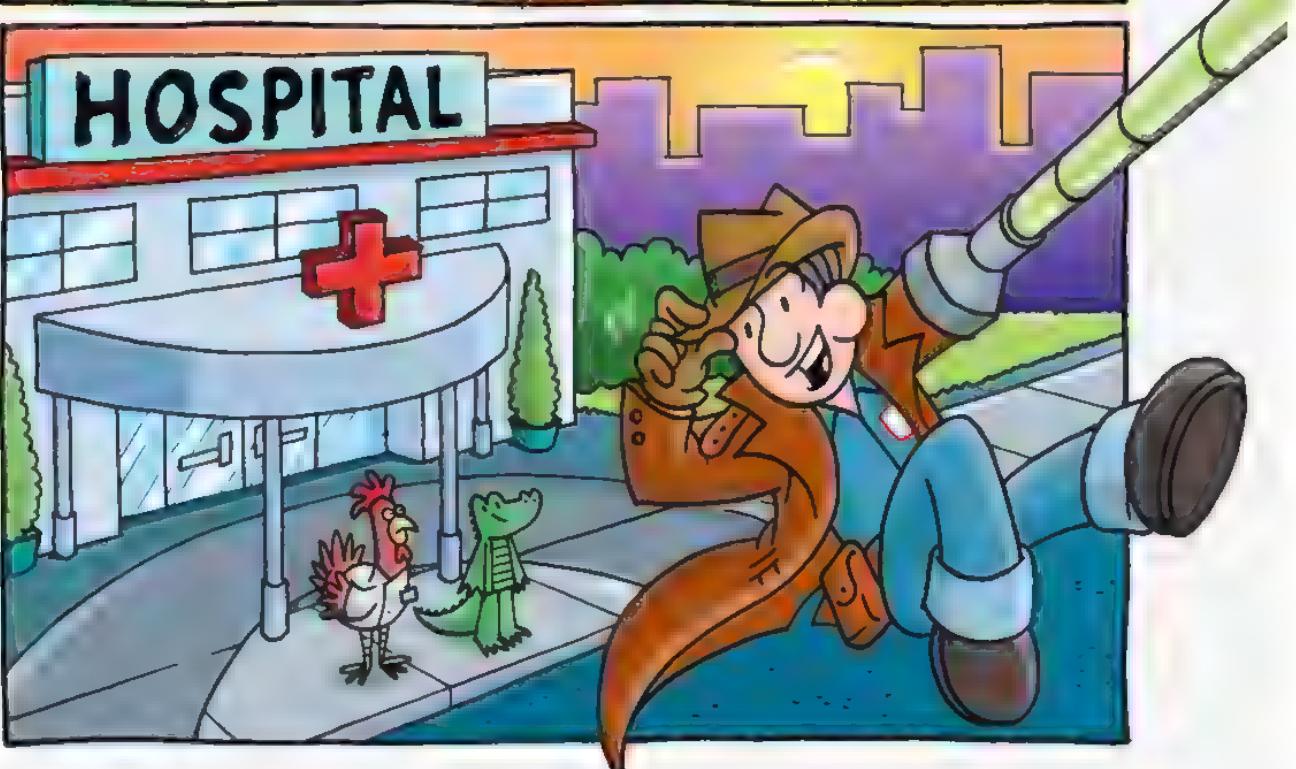
Somehow I always knew you had it in you to be a good guy.

Even if the trench coat made it hard to tell.



See ya around.

Shake
!!



Epilogue

Inside S.U.I.T. Headquarters...

Thank you for coming in, Agent Mango.



I want to commend you on stopping Crackerdile—er, Waffledile.



Though he is technically still at large—**VERY** large—we at least know where he is, and he won't be going anywhere anytime soon.



Thank you, sir. But I still feel like Crackerdile won.
What he—I—did to Brash...

Don't be too hard
on yourself, Mango.
You were faced with
a tough decision,
and you made
the right call.



And while Brash is recovering, YOU are now S.U.I.T.'s
top agent. There's a lot of crime out there that
needs investigating.

TOP AGENT?
I dunno, sir—



You won't be in the field alone, Mango. For the time
being, you'll be paired up with a NEW partner... Just
until Brash is back on his feet.

New...
partner?

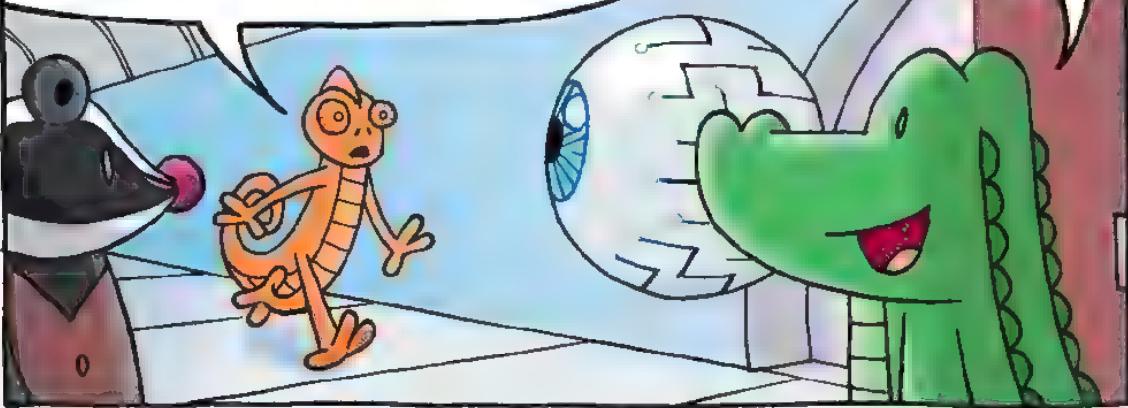


I'm proud of you, Agent Mango. Brash would be, too.
Now go out there and *keep up the good work!*



Am I late? I was told Mango
is getting a new partner.

CILANTRO!



You must be my new partner!

REALLY?!

No, Mango.
It's ME.

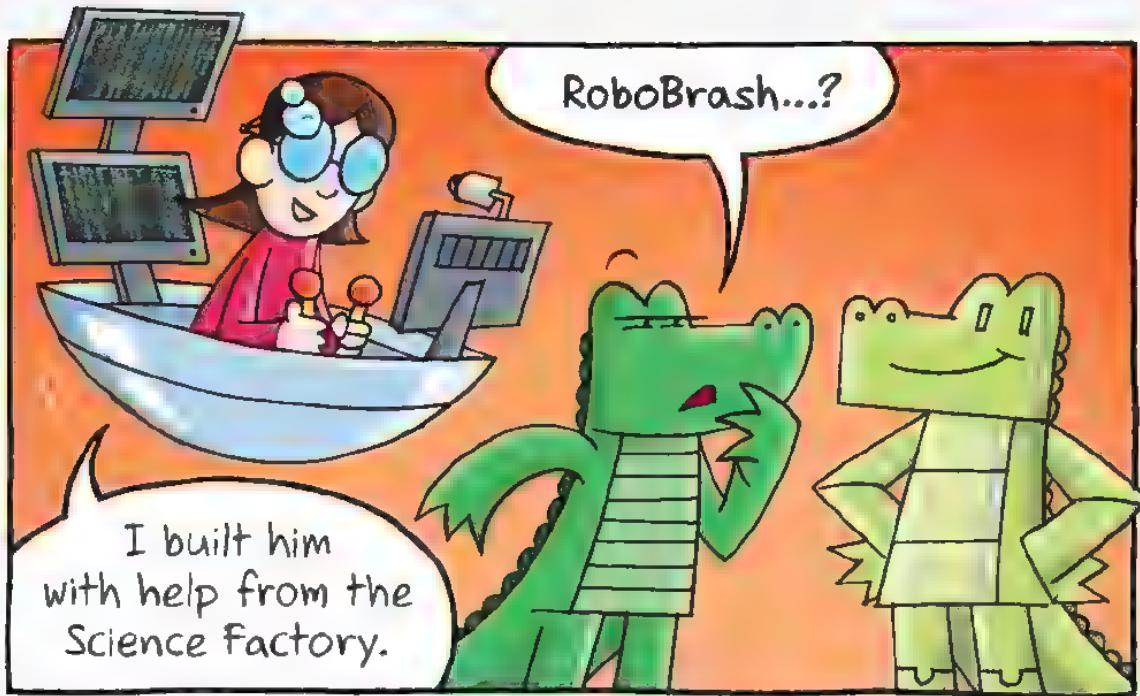
That sounds...
like BRASH!!



You can call me...
ROBOBRASH!

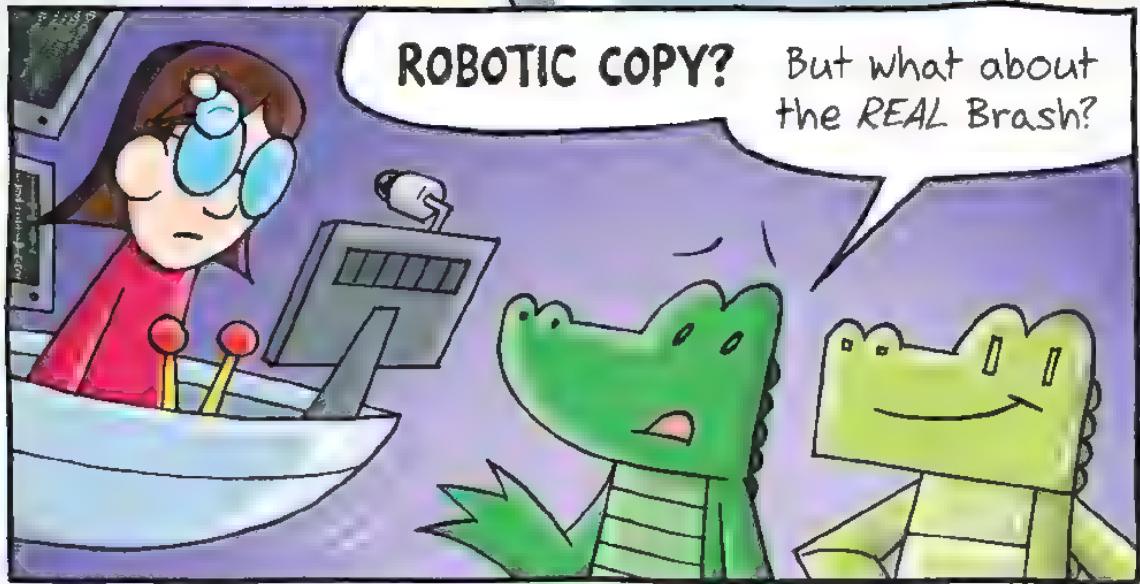
!



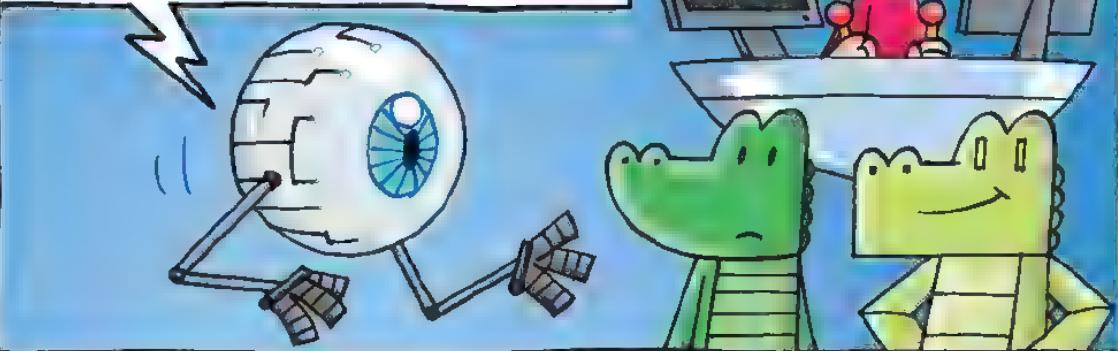


Even though Dr. Hardbones is still figuring out a way to wake up Brash, the Head Scientist was able to send me **downloads** of most of Brash's personality and experiences.

Then I uploaded them into this **robotic copy** I made out of spare parts.



No one's given up on the *real* Brash, Mango. RoboBrash is not a replacement for him.



But for now, out of *all* the other agents in S.U.I.T., no one would make a better partner for you than *RoboBrash!*



So I'm...not his new partner...?

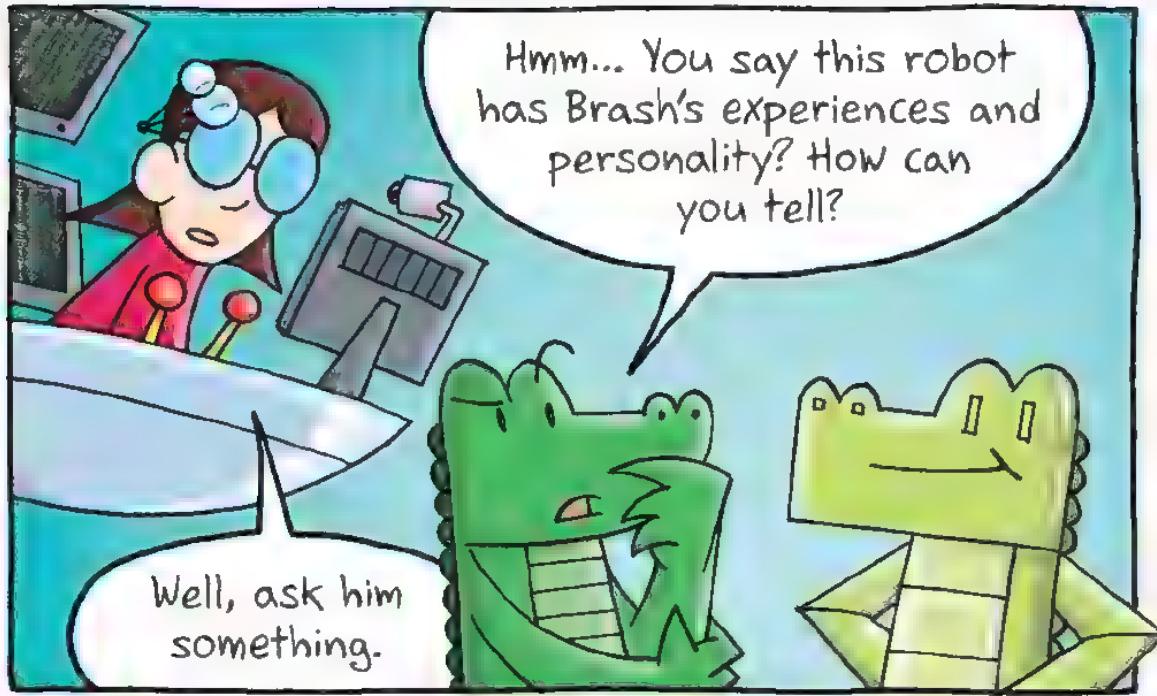


How about that, eh, Cilantro?

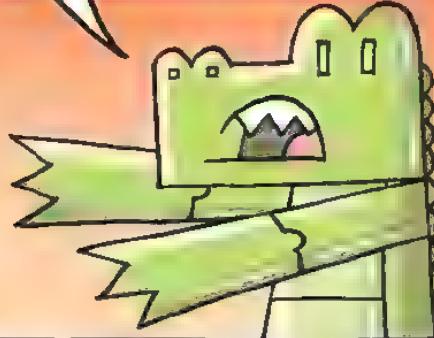
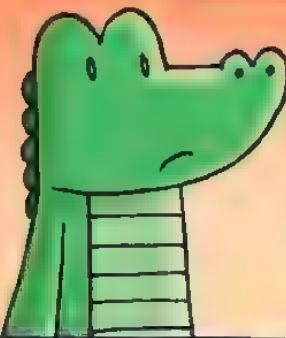


...Cilantro?





You should know this, Mango! Perhaps you need to run the training simulation again.
PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT!



Yup, that sounds just like Brash!

LET'S GO!



Hurry up, Mango! WALK THIS WAY!

You mean walk like this?

WHAT? NO!
Do not walk LIKE me.

But you said
"walk this way."



YOU KNOW
WHAT I MEANT!

Later, downtown...

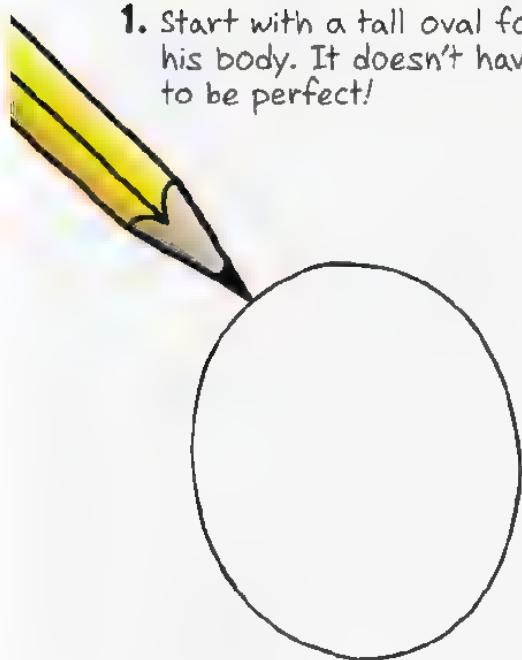




INVESTIGATORS

How to draw WAFFLEDILE

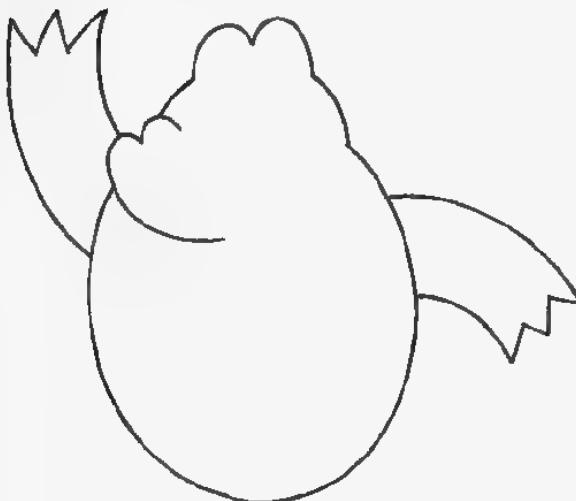
1. Start with a tall oval for his body. It doesn't have to be perfect!



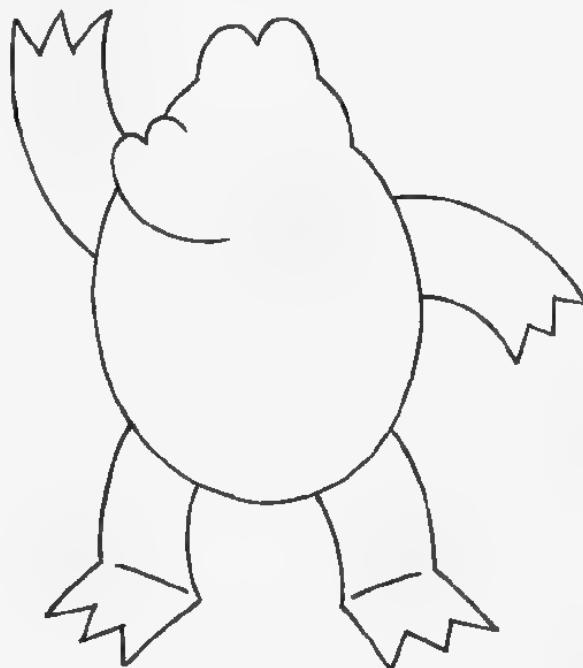
2. Add some big curves for his forehead, with some smaller loops for his snout. Then erase the line where his head overlaps his body (shown in blue).



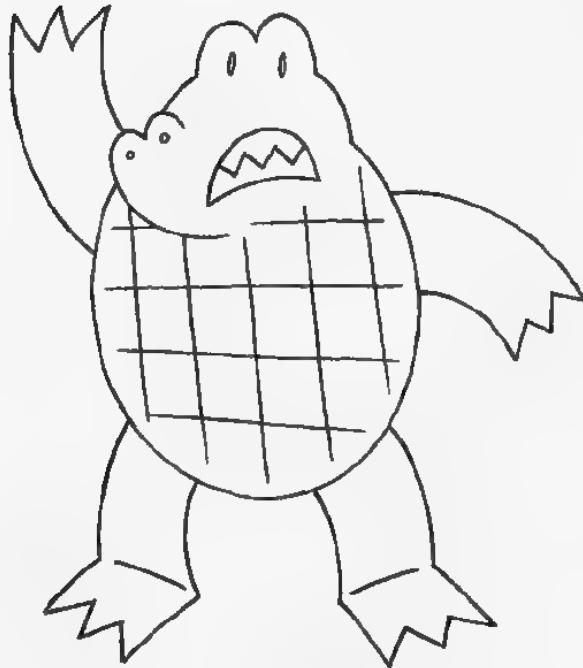
3. Draw arms with little triangles for fingers. Waffledile normally has three, but when he makes a fist you'll also see his thumb.



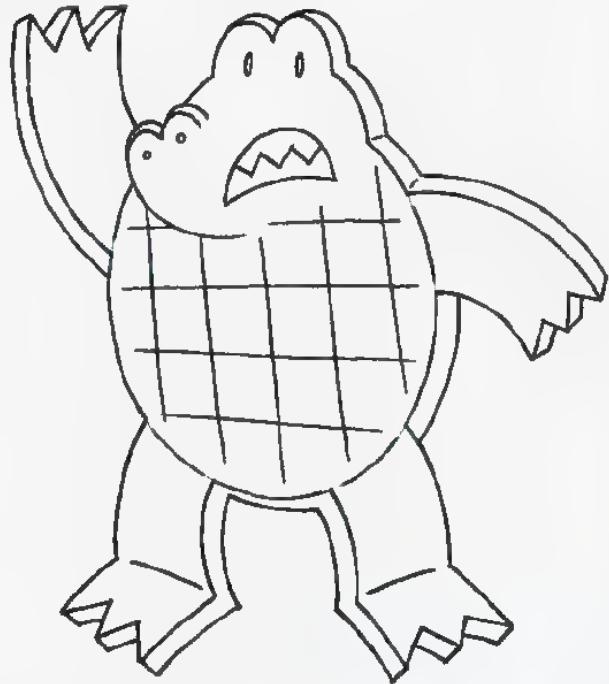
4. Next, add legs, with more triangles for toes. Include lines to show where his feet bend at the ankle.



5. Add details like eyes, nostrils, a mouth with pointy teeth, and a grid for a waffle pattern.



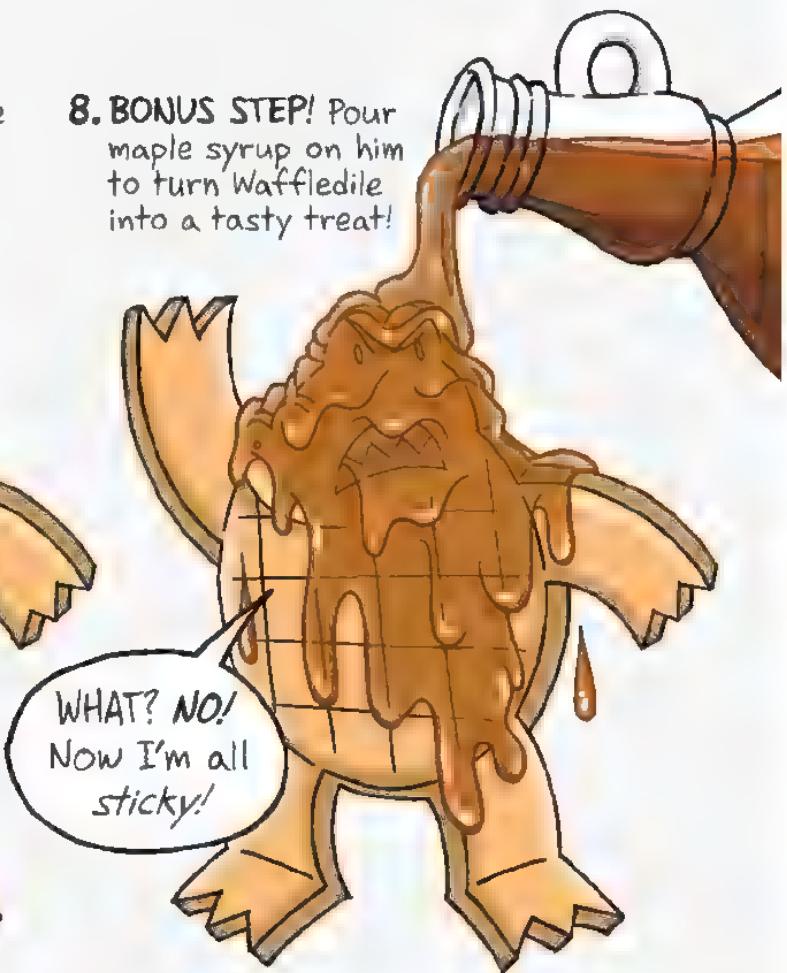
6. Draw lines around one side of his nose, head, body, arms, and legs. This will make him look 3D but also flat! Erase a tiny bit of the lines where his arms and legs connect to his body.



7. Finally, color him in. And give him some angry eyebrows, because Waffledile's always mad about something!



8. **BONUS STEP!** Pour maple syrup on him to turn Waffledile into a tasty treat!



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MOTHER of ALL WAFFLES

Wac 'n' Cheese

Two of our signature waffles with baked-in macaroni and cheese centers! They're ooey, gooey, and make your tastebuds go kablooey! Served with maple sriracha.

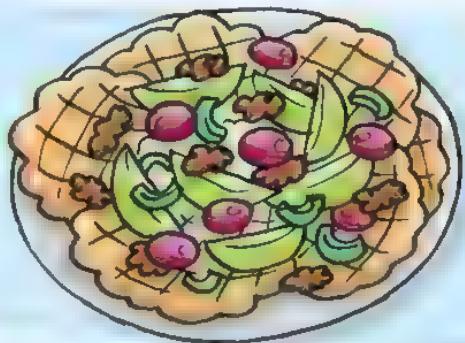


Boneless Buffalo Wafflings

Half waffle, half wing, ALL FLAVOR! Choice of mild, medium, hot, or volcano. Served with celery and a smoked maple blue cheese dip. May contain bones.

Waldorffle Salad

A harmonious blend of apples, celery, grapes, and wafflenuts, dressed in maple mayo, and served on a bed of wafflettuce.



The Chucket™

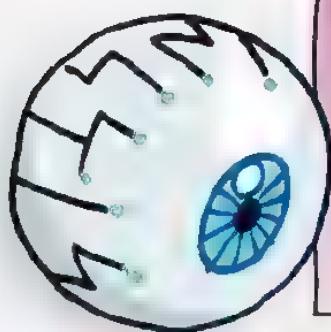
Chunks of buttermilk fried chicken served in an edible waffle-bucket! Available in small, medium, and super-double-medium.

Menu subject to change.

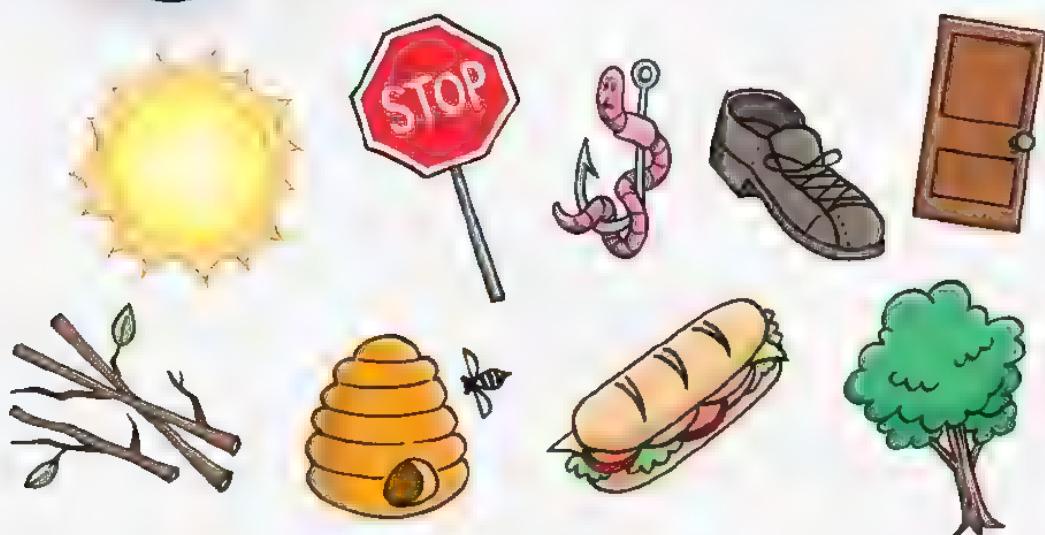
The horror!
THE HORROR!

Agent Monocle is hacking into a secret database and has one last chance to crack the code. Of the numbers she's tried below, each guess has just one correct digit that's in the correct order. Knowing that, can you figure out the 3-digit passcode?

Passcode:	896	X
Passcode:	983	X
Passcode:	246	X
Passcode:	843	X
Passcode:	***	✓



C-ORB sees everything, but can't see the connection between these nine objects. Can you tell what they have in common, and figure out if anything's missing?



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John Patrick Green

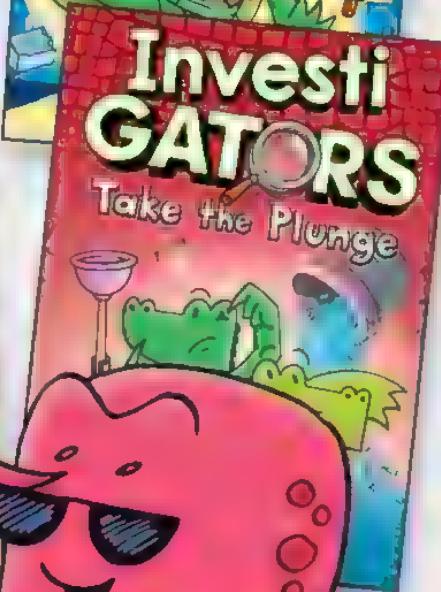
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Take the Plunge



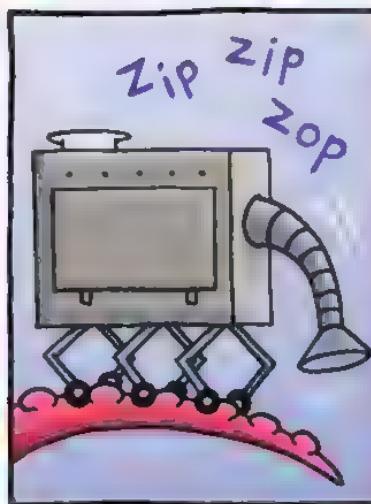
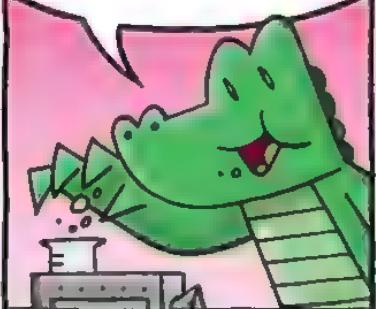
Oooh! I
can't wait to
get my arms
on that!

Invent a V.E.S.T.*!

Mango and RoboBrash! I put out the call for new, creative, extra-special V.E.S.T.s and our junior agents really delivered! This SCENT DETECTOR gadget was invented by Clara from Grand Junction, Colorado. Just provide a sample of something you want to find and it will track it by its smell!



Scent Detector:
find me more
bean tacos!



It must be malfunctioning.
This doesn't make sense!

Wrong! Mango's belly
is FULL of beans. It
definitely makes scents!



*Very Exciting Spy Technology

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Special thanks to...

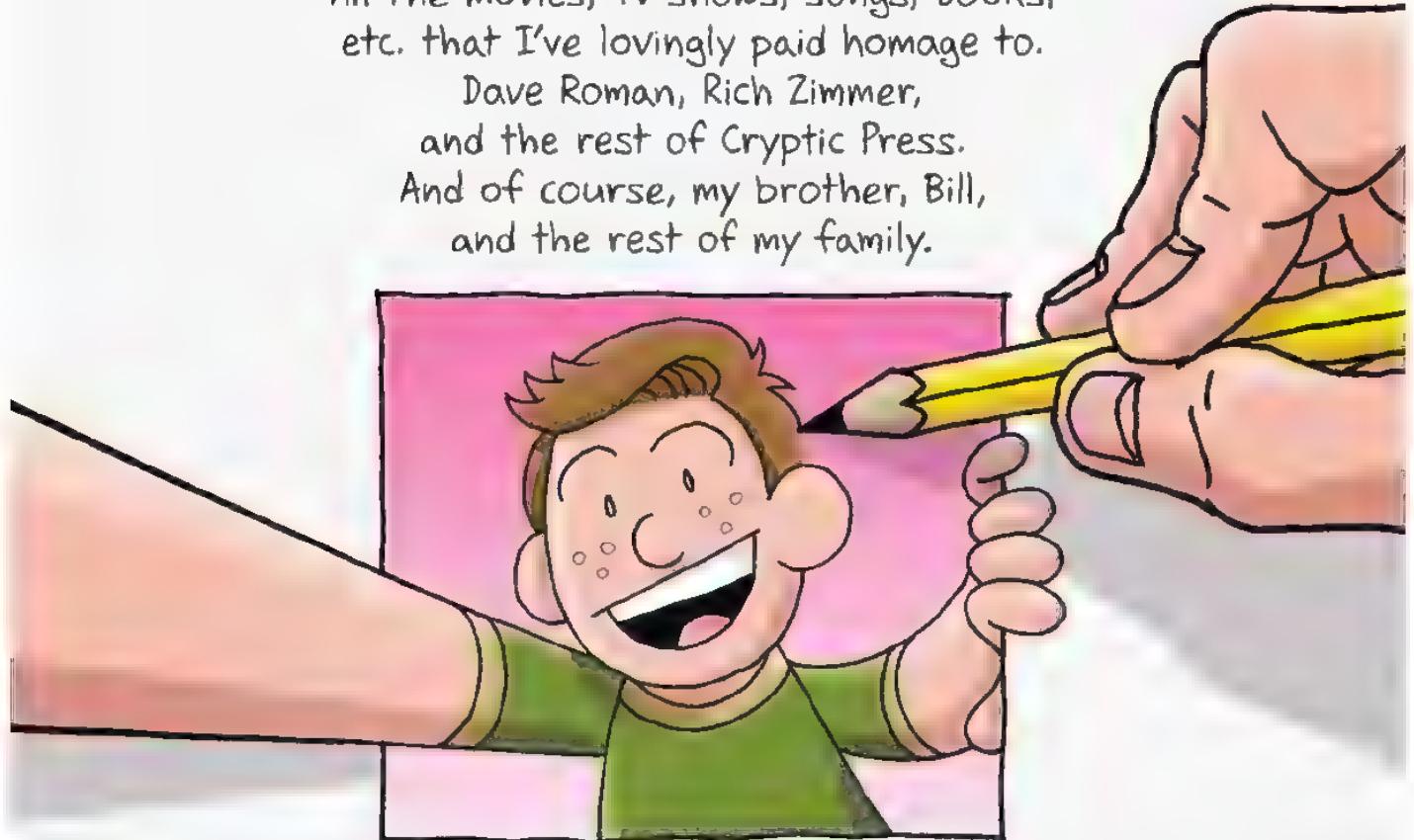
Aaron Polk and his flatters, Christine Brunson and Robin Fasel, for their incredible colors.

My editors, Calista Brill, Rachel Stark, and some new person, plus everyone else at First Second who's had to tolerate me.

My agent, the extraordinary Jen Linnan. All the movies, TV shows, songs, books, etc. that I've lovingly paid homage to.

Dave Roman, Rich Zimmer, and the rest of Cryptic Press.

And of course, my brother, Bill, and the rest of my family.



John Patrick Green is a New York Times-bestselling author who makes books about animals with human jobs, such as *Hippopotamister*, the Kitten Construction Company series, and the InvestiGators series. John is definitely not just a bunch of animals wearing a human suit pretending to have a human job. He is also the artist and co-creator of the graphic novel series *Teen Boat!*, with writer Dave Roman. John lives in Brooklyn in an apartment that doesn't allow animals other than the ones living in his head.

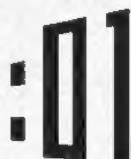
Investi GATORS

Off the Hook



written and illustrated by
John Patrick Green

with color by Aaron Polk



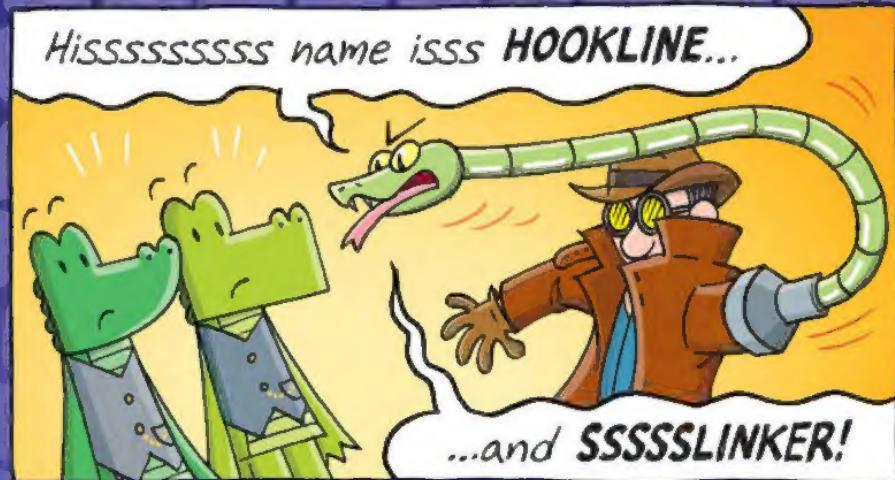
First Second
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Praise for *InvestiGATORS*

"Heaping helpings of surreal alligator action."

—The New York Times

The **INVESTIGATORS** chase after a new criminal...



...but they're about to face an even **BIGGER** villain!



Can Mango and Brash put a **STOP** to this looming threat?

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New York *Best-Selling Author*

John Patrick Green